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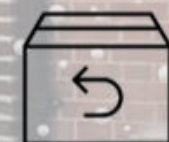
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THIS MONTH we've been reading the **SCU SERIES** by Kay Hooper (a spookynatural unit of the FBI investigate paranormal wossnames); **OUR GAME** by John Le Carre (dreadful, simply dreadful. Bloated meandering maudlin parody of what a great writer used to be); **UNKNOWN MALE** by Nicholas Obregon (splendid Japanese police procedurals. Also **ALTERED LIFE** by Keith Dixon (a detective tale set in outer Manchester and an OK read); **DEATH IN OSLO** by Anne Holt (surprisingly gripping investigation in – you guessed – Oslo), and **DOGGEREL FOR DEAD WHORES** by Robb White (an utterly intense and terrifying multi-murder tale set in a seriously uncivilised USA).

MEANWHILE AT THE MOVIES... we were underwhelmed by Carnival Row but gobsmacked in a good way by Goliath S3; thought Helen Mirren was excellent in The Good Liar but Ian McKellan really was too old for the role; enjoyed the visuals in Antarctica: A Year On Ice, and can't comprehend how they're going to turn the post-apocalyptic Snowpiercer into a series...

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FROM THE FRONT

Right at the rear end of this somewhat troublesome issue you'll find some daft old bloke finally riding a 'project' bike for a few not entirely hot and sunny miles. And of course you get no prizes at all for guessing the secret – or otherwise – identity of that daft old bloke. Correct, it's me. How did the first few rides go? You can read that at the back, if you get that far before Seasonal Affective Disorder sets in. That's a posh modernistic name for getting fed up when it rains a lot. Which it has been.

One of the many remarkable benefits – maybe 'features' would be a better word – of advancing years is that I can easily forget what I've already written about. This actually is a benefit, because in previously more youthful years I would lie awake at night, fretting over whether I'd been repeating myself again – or worse; whether I'd contradicted something I'd written the previous month.

The project A65T has been interesting. The Chinese have a curse about that particular adjective, but you know that already. What I was suffering from when I decided to embark on the project (every project I've attempted has resulted in my swearing never to attempt another) was a fond memory. I enjoy lots of fond memories, which is mostly a good thing, otherwise I'd end up whining away about the good old days and complaining about everything modern – and I'd get very fed up with myself very quickly if I did that too often. What my fond memories produce is memories of great things – riding great bikes to great places, meeting great folk and having a great time; things like that. Followed by the urge to repeat the experience.

Years and years and years ago, I stumbled over a bitza BSA A65 at a show somewhere. It was really neat, with high-level pipes, alloy rims, trail tyres, a solo seat, an alloy tank and lots of truly tidy touches. It also didn't work, and was pleasantly inexpensive. Also – an important thing – the vendor would deliver it for the cost of his fuel. Of course I bought it. Some things never change, and acquisitiveness is one of them.

The Beezer was great. We shared lots of really good rides, and it was totally weatherproof. It had almost no brightwork at all and what remained of the chrome was severely rusty, so it was a great and mostly valueless machine. It was also sporadically unreliable, simply dying for no reason I ever worked out, and then running happily again just as soon as I got it home. I replaced everything which could affect its running in



that way and every fix worked ... until it died again. So it went away.

But, as you might expect, all I really remembered about it was that it was great. Those fond memories again. It was so great that plainly I should set to and find a semi-derelict A65 and convert it into something similar, just with lots of brand new modern kit to provide the reliability which the earlier Beezer lacked. And that bike is the bike in The Shed at the moment. The original plan had been to produce a go anywhere, any weather machine built from secondhand bits – as Oddie always manages to do with glorious ease. Except... I am no fitter. And I now have a machine which is fabbo in every way. It is fabbo – it runs beautifully and rides better than that.

But it's very very shiny, and new and... not like that old bodger Beezer of fond memory at all. There may be a lesson here, but I doubt that I'll learn it...

Ride safely

Frank Westworth
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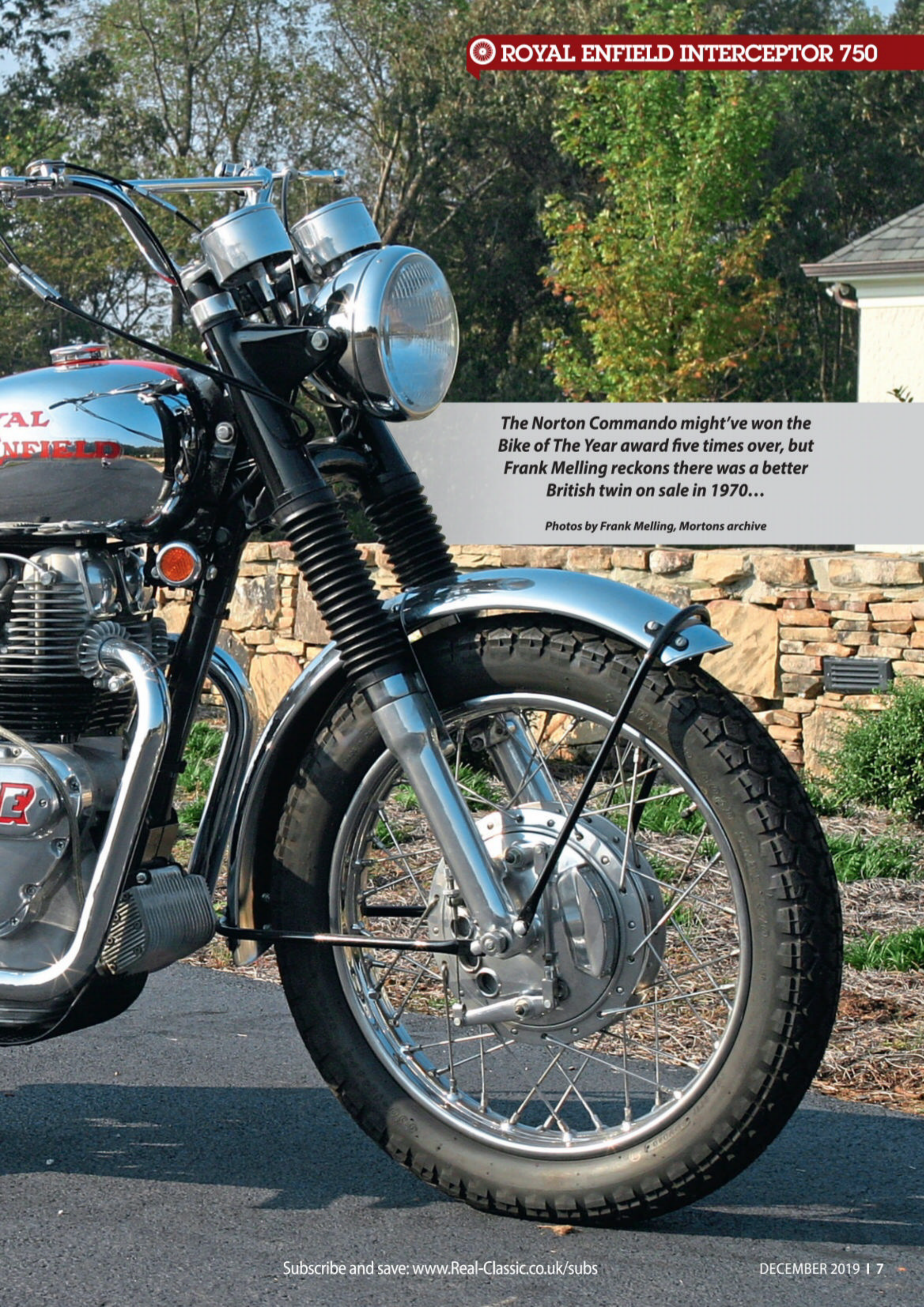
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THE SUPERIOR 750





The Norton Commando might've won the Bike of The Year award five times over, but Frank Melling reckons there was a better British twin on sale in 1970...

Photos by Frank Melling, Mortons archive



If ever a machine was all about its engine, the Series 2 Interceptor is that machine. The handsome alloy oil cooler fitted at the front below the engine is hardly necessary in the chilly UK, but was a good idea when riding hard in hotter climes. Cylinder head cooling was also plainly a priority

GO Interceptor



ROYAL ENFIELD MOTOR CYCLES, BRADFORD-ON-AVON, ENGLAND.

RE's advertising was, shall we say, of its time. It's maybe amusing that the mono magazine ad featuring the home market touring tank is the bike which got the girl. Well it was the end of the swinging Sixties...

The epitome of a big, brutal British twin. Crack it up and smell the testosterone

I have been very fortunate to own many of my dream motorcycles, but the Royal Enfield Interceptor Series 2 has slipped through the net on three occasions. The first time was forgivable. In 1970 I saw the pictures in the bike press and thought that the big Enfield was the sexiest twin on the block, but it was way beyond my student budget.

Some years later, I was racing in America and a fellow rider offered me a mint Series 2 for not much more than a decent meal out, but I was only really interested in competition machines. I drooled over his garage floor but the Enfield stayed in California. The final time I didn't buy an Interceptor was when I had a whopping mortgage of death-defying proportions.

So what's the big attraction of the Series 2 750? First, the bike looks drop dead gorgeous – outstandingly the best looking British bike of its day. Compared with the ray gun silencer, slab tanked BSA Rocket 3 and its even plainer Triumph Trident sister, the Interceptor looks slim and nimble with its faux scrambler styling and two-gallon chrome fuel tank. I just love the cast

alloy instrument holders and the oil cooler. Come on, who doesn't need an oil cooler in an English summer? The Interceptor is definitely one heck of a looker... and beneath the good looks lies a very, very competent motorcycle.

But if it's so good, then why isn't the Series 2 a leading icon in the pantheon of British motorcycling? It was the right bike – just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Royal Enfield was a strange company, very often at the leading edge of motorcycle technology but never quite big enough to take on BSA, Triumph and AMC. As early as 1912, RE was the first motorcycle company in the world to use a rubber vane cush drive to smooth out the drive to the rear wheel and, a year later, they had a fully recirculating oil system when the rest of the biking world thought that total loss systems were still the only way to go.

By 1946, Enfield's assistant chief designer Tony Wilson-Jones had an incredibly sophisticated, two-way damped, telescopic fork in production followed by a fully pivoted rear fork. Royal Enfield were also responsible for the first aerodynamically designed fully-faired super-tourer.

As early as 1958 they conducted research into anti-lock brakes, using the Dunlop Maxaret system long before ABS was even considered for cars. Somewhat ironically, in view of the high skill level of 1950s motorcyclists when compared to today, Wilson-Jones thought that ABS was unnecessary and expensive with no practical value in the real world. Despite their innovative thinking, the marque lacked sufficient sales to fund intense research and

We only supply the bike..



Since its introduction twelve months ago, the SERIES II INTERCEPTOR has achieved an impressive reputation. Built to meticulous standards, its rugged good looks, immaculate handling, enormous torque throughout the rev. range and train-like reliability have proved an intriguing combination for the man and train-like reliability have proved an intriguing combination for the man and train-like reliability have proved an intriguing combination for the man

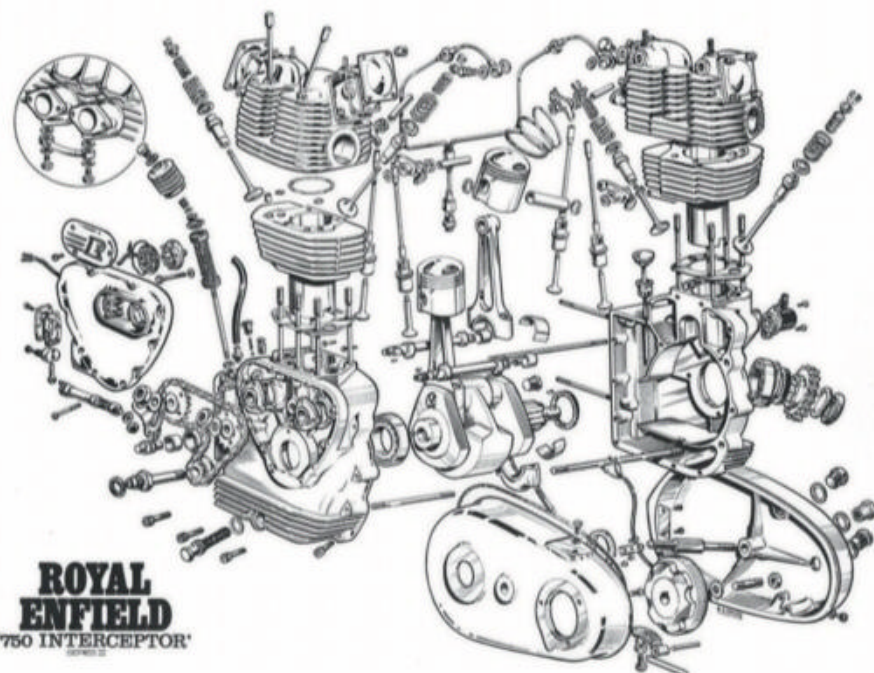
FOUR BIG EXTRAS – and still with the 1969 Price Tag!

The oil cooler, carburettor, air cleaner, skid plate and pillion passenger hand rail, previously offered as separate and additional extras, have now become standard equipment, to further enhance the individual character and powerful personality of this thrilling mount.

ROYAL ENFIELD Interceptor

Further information from:
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**ROYAL
ENFIELD**
"750 INTERCEPTOR"

One exploded Series 2 engine. Beautifully compact crank was dynamically balanced to keep things reasonably smooth

to purchase new tooling.

Enfield thrived during WW2, producing mainly WD/C 350 sidevalves for the British and Commonwealth armies plus the Flying Flea for use by airborne forces. In a nifty piece of financial footwork, at the end of the war RE bought back their machines from the British government and civilianised them for re-sale to a population desperate for personal transport. However, sidevalve singles were not the long term answer. The new kid on the block had appeared in 1938 – Edward Turner's game changing Speed Twin. Henceforth, every manufacturer needed a twin.

RE's answer was a particularly neat offering following the standard pattern of the day: pushrod

valve gear, single carburettor and a separate four-speed gearbox. Unusually, the two cylinder barrels were individual and so did not provide the rigidity of the Triumph, BSA and Norton conjoined designs. The reason for this odd arrangement was, inevitably, a lack of capital. Ted Pardoe was RE's long serving chief designer and he minimised the cost of the new twin by raiding the parts bins from RE's 250cc Clipper, a long-stroke 250 with a bore and stroke of 64mm x 77mm. Pardoe wasn't one of the world's greatest motorcycle designers, but with a decent budget he probably would have come up with something

considerably cleverer, as he had on many occasions during his long stint at RE.

With the arrival of the 650 twins from BSA, Triumph and Norton the pressure was on for a competitor, especially to meet the demands of the burgeoning American market. Tony Wilson-Jones had taken over as Enfield's head of design and, in a piece of archetypal British garden shed engineering, effectively grafted two of RE's 350 Bullet single top halves onto the crankcase from the 500 twin to come up with a 692cc motor which produced 36hp at 6000rpm. This was right up there with the opposition. The torque of the new twin warped its crankcases and gave birth to the 'Royal Oilfield' nickname. However, the twin did ride very well – but few Triumph and BSA dealers lost any sleep.

In 1955, the power was

SEVEN - FIFTY INTERCEPTOR TECHNICAL DATA

ENGINE	O.H.V. vertical twin 4-stroke.	GEAR RATIOS	4.44, 6.05, 8.19, 12.4.
BORE AND STROKE	71 x 93 m.m. (2.9" x 3.8").	M.P.H. per 1,000 r.p.m. in top gear	16.9.
COMPRESSION RATIO	8.5 = 1	FUEL TANK CAPACITY	2.3 U.S. GALLONS.
CARBURETTORS	TWIN AMAL CONCENTRIC. 30 m.m. Choke dia.	OIL TANK CAPACITY	4.5 U.S. PINTS.
IGNITION	12v. Lucas Capacitor System with twin coils. Automatic Advance.	GEARBOX OIL CAPACITY	1 U.S. PINT.
REAR SUSPENSION	Pivoted Fork with Girling oil-controlled Damper units.	SEAT HEIGHT	30.5 ins.
FRONT FORK	Telescopic with two-way hydraulic damping.	WHEELBASE	57 ins.
HUBS	Full width, light Alloy. Q.D. Rear.	OVERALL WIDTH	32 ins.
BRAKES	8" x 1 1/4" Front, 7" x 1" Rear.	GROUND CLEARANCE	5.75 ins.
TYRE SIZES	3.50 x 19 front, 4.00 x 18 rear. Dunlop K.70.	WEIGHT	426 lbs.



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All you need to know

Frank M loves bling, and is particularly keen on the shiny chrome fuel tank on the Interceptor. Handsome handlebars help throw the beast around





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The Interceptor was clearly aimed at the US Street Scrambler market

Introducing the Series II **SEVEN-FIFTY INTERCEPTOR**

When it was announced that Enfield Precision Engineers Ltd. - a company famous in England for the manufacture of aircraft and guided weapon components - were to take over the complete manufacture of Royal Enfield Interceptor motorcycles instead of producing only the engine, everyone knew that something special would follow, and here it is, a completely new Stage II Interceptor.

This machine is not mass produced but is made under toolroom conditions in a precision engineering factory where only a limited number are made each year embodying all the skill and craftsmanship for which England is famous.

Not everybody can have one. There aren't enough to go round. That is why the owner of an Interceptor always has something special. Something the other fellow hasn't got.



Enfield were honest in their ads. Only six blokes worked making Interceptors so there were never a lot of bikes to go round



Waste heat from the Zener diode is dissipated by the rather stylish heat sink

hiked up to 40hp along with a brand new frame, alternator electrics and a genuine 100mph performance. Once again, a lack of capital prevented RE from taking full advantage of what was arguably the best big twin of its day. Another major revamp came in 1962, when Royal Enfield introduced their all new 736cc twin cylinder engine with the first 750 Interceptor. Wilson-Jones was always a fan of long stroke engines, which he believed offered more torque at real world rpm, so the new engine was 71mm x 93mm. Although externally similar to the old 692cc motor, there was hardly any part that was not modified or improved. In particular, the engine cases were beefed up to withstand the increased torque, but the problem of excessive crankcase pressure remained.

This rather conventional engine was unusual in that its crank was dynamically balanced, the best fix available before the arrival of counter balancers. This made the Interceptor one of the smoothest British twin engines ever. The Series 1 bikes had an automatic advance magneto and a new seat. There was a rare, single carburettor model as well. Production went on until 1966.

The Interceptor's problems lay not so much in the engine but the cycle parts. The double-sided 6" front brakes, even with the addition of shrunk-on cooling fins lifted from British short circuit racing, were bottom-clenchingly inadequate for a bike which really would romp up to 100mph. The quirky leading axle front fork, which had been state of the art at one time, was also now showing its age.

In the midst of all this, the firm's chairman died and Royal Enfield ceased being a family-run business. The board of directors recommended the sale of Royal Enfield to the Midlands engineering conglomerate E&HP Smith, who already had Alpha Bearings in their portfolio. Enfield weren't the only British manufacturer to be going through turbulent times; in 1965,

Manganese Bronze Holdings purchased Villiers Engineering - the key proprietary engine supplier to all the smaller British bike manufacturers. A year later the once mighty AMC concern - Matchless, AJS, Norton, James and Francis-Barnett - collapsed and was gobbled up by Manganese Bronze. And Norton Villiers had an agreement with E&HP Smith to build the Interceptor although the marketing was transferred back to Enfield. Effectively, both the big British twins - the Norton Commando and Enfield Interceptor - were in direct competition with overlapping ownership, and they were damaging each other's sales in the USA.

Although the RE's Redditch factory had gone, there still remained their Bradford on Avon site. This was a wartime shadow factory, suitably distant from the Midlands. It was located in a disused quarry and the whole system was underground. In the maelstrom of takeovers and deals, the Bradford on Avon factory continued trading as Enfield Precision Engineers. This company both manufactured and assembled the last Interceptors - and what lovely things they were and are.

The engine was finally completely sorted. Fed by a pair of 30mm Amal Concentrics, the new motor put out around 55bhp at 6500rpm, equivalent to a real 110mph, accompanied by fierce acceleration in every gear. With beefed up crankcases and a reliable, wet sump lubrication system, the Interceptor is a lovely thing. Norton supplied the excellent, long Roadholder front fork which they were using on the G15 Matchless and the 8" front brake, along with the 2ls conversion, from the Commando.

Its looks made the Interceptor a real head turner. So why wouldn't you put the bike into mass production? There's a single-word answer: Commando. It would have been a thoroughly stupid decision to run the Interceptor against the inferior Commando. Nor was the Enfield operation equipped to supply a mass market. The Interceptor



Front fork assembly and wheel came from the Norton parts list, as did the instrument holders. Commando 2ls brake plate was a popular aftermarket fitment



Thanks to Burton Bike Bits for their help with the information for this feature, and to Keith Campbell at Hourglass Racing (vintagememoriesinc.com) who provided the bike for our photographs

production line was a real backyard affair, with three blokes building the bikes from bits which came in from all over the place and another three working on the engines.

This meant that there were very, very few of the Nortonised Series 2 Interceptors built. Most of these went to America and a few more to Sweden. Some found their way on to the British market. So if you want one of these fabulous bikes then you will have to search hard.

On the upside, the machine's original weakness has been fixed. Arguably the worst part of the Interceptor was the dreadful Lucas capacitor ignition system. This can be replaced with a reliable, modern electronic unit which fires up the bike easily.

I always thought the Interceptor handled fine – and these days modern tyres and decent rear shocks mean that the size of your cojones is now the only limiting factor to how fast you want to ride. The 'scrambler' riding position, with the forward mounted footrests, is much better than a café racer crouch and is fine for recreational motorcycling. I actually prefer Norton's 2ls front brake to early discs, so the Interceptor stops as well as it goes. The gearbox isn't the very best in the classic world but it works fine if you swap cogs methodically.

The power is sublime. Crack the throttle open and that anthropomorphic long stroke



The final Interceptor really is one big beast with a lot of presence

engine knocks out a white wave of torque which is unequalled in the classic world. No Triumph, Norton or even Vincent gets near it for bottom-kicking punch. Revving the man bits off the bike does no good. Pop the next gear in at 4500rpm and you will be keeping up with all the modern traffic. Then there's also the growl from those short silencers which bark out an unmistakable message that this is a big, rorty British twin in all its glorious majesty.

Stuff the Japanese. Stuff electric starters. Stuff five-speed gearboxes. Stuff left-foot gear changes. The Interceptor says 'Let me take my shirt off and I'll give you all a politically incorrect good hiding.' Lovely! Alternatively, it also has so much torque that

you can bumble round at not much more than tickover and watch the world go by – but why would you want to do this on an Interceptor?

Finally, the spares situation is excellent. Mick Page at Burton Bike Bits bought all the Interceptor spares when the factory finally closed and has a full range in stock. In fact, Mick could build you a brand new Interceptor if you had the budget. Mick runs his own Series 2 Interceptor, and this has now done 80,000 without a spanner being laid on the bottom half of the engine or gearbox, although it did have a pair of pistons at 40,000 miles. Mick is a lovely bloke and was very helpful with this article so it's nice to know that you would not be flying solo if you end up with one of these rarities. **RC**



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RC readers write, rant and rattle on...

Summat to say? Send your comments, hints, tips, tales of woe and derring-don't to: RCHQ@RealClassic.net



At last I have found a chrome plating company that gets the job done on time and gives you a price before they start. Ace

Plating in Birmingham are very nice people to deal with. These parts cost £75 plus VAT and it looks good to me. This is not a show bike but it needs to look good when finished so I'm happy for once.

John Elsdon, member



YOU'RE A WISE MAN, FRANK

Yesterday I took my recommissioned bike to the local Honda / Yamaha dealer in Victoria, Australia, hoping to obtain a Roadworthiness Certificate (MoT) in preparation for returning the steed to the highways and byways.

As I wheeled the bike in and propped it up on its rear stand, the Testing Guy sauntered out of his office. He did two full laps of the bike, ignoring me as I faded into invisibleness.

'What do we have here?' he said.

'A Triumph TRW from 1964. the MkIII version.'

'Like a Bonneville then?'

'Nope - better' said I, complete with an eye roll.

'Lights work? Turn 'em on.' I did.

'Leak oil?'

'Nope' I said, stuffing the freshly oiled rag deeper into my pocket.'

'Start it up!' I did.

'Sounds like a Triumph' he said as pistons gently rustled, gears whirled, valves clicked with the whole bike gently shaking as though remembering a funny joke from long ago.

'Gonna paint it, polish it and re-do the chrome?'

'Nope.'

'Why not?'

'Because it's taken over 50 years to look like this, every scratch, ding and blemish has a tale to tell. It would be arrogant of me to undo all that history. Anyway, Frank would be most unhappy.'

'Who's Frank?'

'He's a guy who writes a lot. Interesting guy, never met him but he makes me smile. And he doesn't like shiny things.'

'Right answer. Your bike's passed. Tell Frank he's a wise man.'

So I am.

Ross Cowdell, Member 704450

Ah... An early Christmas bonus!. Thanks, Ross! **Frank the Wise**

CURRENCY CONVERSION

In PUB's report from Kop Hill in RC187 she says that one shilling and six pence equals 18p. Surely that should be seven and a half pence?

John Harmes, member 1736

Quite right, and I noticed it as soon as it was in print - but it would have been better to notice it during my proof reads. I am very embarrassed, but it happened because I copied the history straight off the story board alongside the bike. It may be that one shilling and sixpence is the wrong figure, as 18p = 3/6d (three shillings and sixpence) ignoring the ½ pennies that no longer exist.

Jacqueline



SPARKY STUFF



Just read Classic Techniques in RC186 concerning electrical wiring. I agree with most of the info and advice given in the article, but I was surprised to read that Stuart Francis is advising spraying WD40 on electrical contacts.

As an electrician of 50 years (now retired), I recall several instances of

electrical faults on machinery where WD40 had been sprayed on contacts, thus preventing a current passing through the oily film that WD40 leaves behind. We all know that WD40 can be applied to good effect on dodgy HT leads, because it acts as an insulator.

Far better to use an approved contact cleaner (usually alcohol based) that evaporates off after the cleaning process is complete.

John Lee, member 3598

I enjoyed the article by Stuart Francis; very interesting and thought provoking. I have rewired four bikes so far, including an electric-start Panther Model 35 ES, and will admit to being a solderer at heart. Very interesting to read about the disadvantages of soldering. I recommend 'Classic Motorcycle Electrics Manual' by James Smith which covers everything

from basic electrics to mags, alternators, dynamos and much more.

I also use Servisol contact cleaner (isopropyl alcohol), a tip passed on by my electronic engineer brother Dave. It is magic spray for corroded switches that don't work. A quick squirt and a flick or two and normal service is resumed. It even works on that electrical nightmare, the seven-pin trailer plug.

Andy Loosemore, member 1713

The use of wet & dry has its moments, but I would urge folks to obtain a fibreglass pencil for the cleaning of tiny wee things, eg. terminals, gold teeth, etc. I get mine from CPC but the wonder web will have infinite dubious sources no doubt. Also, tinning wire ends before insertion into choc blocks makes the idea more acceptable.

Keep up the good work!

Dik Gladstone

ONE LUMP OR TWO?



Today was a revelation, not of the religious type but of the motorcycling type. I had a test ride on the new Enfields, back to back. First the Himalayan 400 single and second the

Interceptor 650 twin.

Initially things did not bode well for the Himalayan as I had to climb onto it, being a bit short in the leg, but once riding I loved it to bits. The handling is perfectly balanced,

engine torquey and it's perfect for lumpy backroads. All the bumps were soaked up without me knowing they were there. After 50 years of riding many bikes this was the easiest bike to ride I have ever been on. After just a few miles it felt like I had been riding it for ages, so easy were the controls and gear spacing. But there was zero vibration: is this really a single?

Next after a brief rest was the Interceptor. My initial impression was of a great engine with lots of torque from the get-go. A very hard seat and I didn't like either the riding position or the handling. It twitched going over white lines and did not inspire confidence in cornering, even compared to my old 1950s Triumph which is fitted with Roadriders. Maybe the Interceptor's tyres needed warming up a lot?

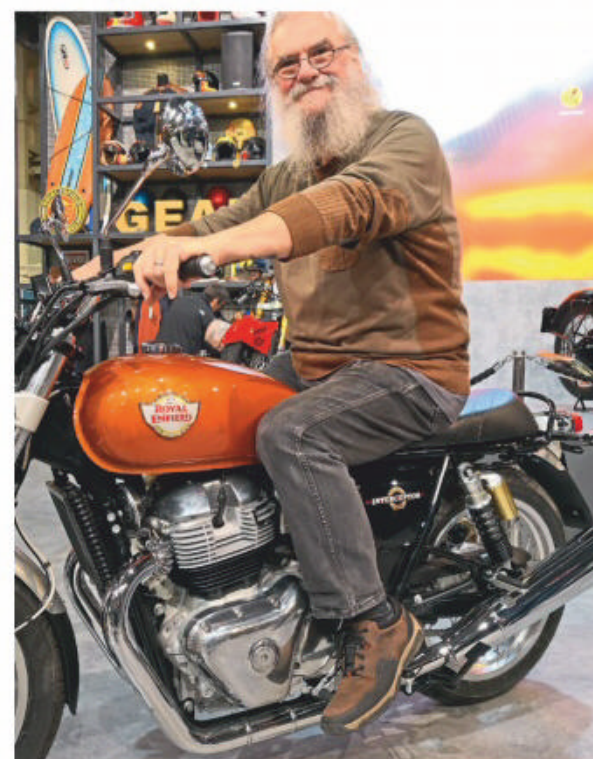
The 650's gearchange was so light I wasn't really sure the gears had engaged. With the torque it has, are six gears really necessary? Five would be more than adequate – and there's no gearchange indicator. I also didn't like the small digits on the speedo which I find difficult to read without specs and the warning lights in the speedo and tach. I left the indicators on more than once, which is a real issue.

The bike for me would be the Himalayan, especially for the French Alps where I do quite a lot of riding. High speed is not an issue but

ease of use and stability are my main concerns.

Stu Thomson, member 2256

Thanks for your thoughts, Stu, and apologies to those people who've been waiting on our long distance test of the 650 twin. Unfortunately, Enfield couldn't loan us a bike during the warmer months... for reasons that aren't entirely clear to me. Maybe they didn't want us clocking up high miles on an Interceptor? Instead we have a couple of full-length owner reports in progress, about the 650 twins and the 400 single. **Rowena**



STOPPING SUDDENLY

I read about the Enfield Bullet's front disc stopping on. Sometimes the flexible pipes deteriorate inside and the disc rotation can't push the pads back into the caliper. A good pull on the handlebar lever puts the brake on but then it doesn't want to come back off.

Hope this helps if you haven't fixed it already.

John Robinson, member 1990

*I'd reached pretty much the same conclusion and decided to replace all the brake hydraulics, seals and pads. You can never be too careful with brakes! **FrankW***



POETIC MOMENTS

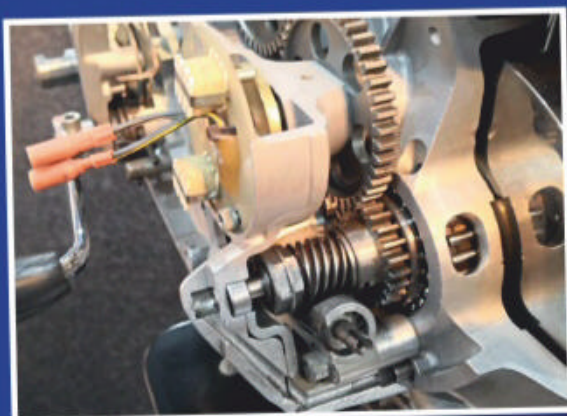


My grandson bought a motorbike
It's made by Yamaha
But then he passed his driving test
And bought himself a car
So I took it for a little ride
To see what it was like
It went quite well for a 125
And was quite a pleasant bike
I've never been the biggest fan
Of Oriental plastic
But it holds the road as if on rails
And for a 125 it's quick
So I said I'd have the little bike
But the colour I would change
I didn't like all over black
So some parts I painted orange (poetic licence)
Although I've called it Tigger
I'll keep the Arfa name alive
So just in case you're wondering
Arfa 250 = 125

Roy Smith, Member 4988



BEEZER BEARINGS



There is a bit of confusion about Barry Wilson's bearing modification for Beezers. I contacted my old pal Les Mason, now long retired from his Devimead company. Les in his early days was a design draftsman

at BSA so he knew his onions on all things Beezer. Les later started up Devimead, specialising in BSA repair, tuning and mods for racing. First on the agenda was his needle roller conversion to replace the plain timing side bush on BSA A50 and A65 units.

Here is the interesting bit. In 1982 Les did a one-off conversion for his brother Ron's Rocket A10. Les remembers a chap called Barry Wilson who worked with Ron at that time. Ron's conversion did over 100,000 miles trouble-free, but Les decided not to put the old A-model conversion into production as they were fully stretched on the later 'flying egg' models.

Roger Slater, member 2429

SHOWING OFF



At the Ardingly classic bike show in October my friend Phil and I had a stand for factory prototype bikes. We had five bikes on display: my AJS 33CSR, the factory Hewitt Special was one of only two painted in red; the AMC factory experimental oil-in-frame G12CSR twin; the experimental unit construction twins, the unified twin, in a

featherbed frame and one in a 1965 N15CS frame; the reconstructed Jack Moore designed Norton twin that was scrapped when Bert Hopwood came to Norton.

We also had on display the Norton twin engine with a shaft drive that was used to power a tractor. There was the bottom half and gearbox with the shaft drive, as well as the crankshaft with steel conrods, and some pistons. I supplied the components to show the construction of the UT engines.

Our stand was mobbed with show-goers, as these bikes had not been seen together for a very long time. I also have the actual factory drawings for the Pluto frame, and the unit engines.

Anthony Curzon, member 1010

Thanks, Anthony. The story of the Jack Moore Norton engine begins elsewhere in this very issue! **Frank W**



REGOLARITA REDUX



We read about the dog-awful Ducati 125 Regularita, it of the 4-stroke bottom end and terrible 2-stroke top end in RC185. Here is our tale of woe on the subject.

About a year ago my son and I acquired two (yes two) of these bikes here in Canada, both very much classified as true 'barn-finds' within the literal and liberal description of what a barn-find must include: green cow-poop encrusted undercarriage, non-runner, flat tyres, missing parts, pigeon-crap covered bodywork, torn seat and more. Our bikes fitted the description at every level. How these bikes got into the hands of a prairie farmer we have no clue. He didn't even know when and where he acquired them. Both bikes still had the original tyres on them and one set still had the little casting 'pips' on the knobs.

I'd answered an ad on our local flea-bay interweb connection late one night and, after driving out into the wilderness, and fighting off bears and wolves, there before us was a tatty but complete Ducati 125 Regularita – with compression, even. After agreeing to buy the bike the seller offered that he had another one for the same price. Not as good, but running (liar, liar, pants on fire). Well it would have run if it had a battery, functioning carburettor, unplugged exhaust, 100% complete wiring and so on. It had run sometime in the past for certain, as the area around the front sprocket was full of compacted mud and this tiny circular driving device had friction welded itself onto the gearbox output shaft.

I worked out that we could get one bike restored and running and sell it for the price we paid for both. Then we would have a free

Ducati. It doesn't get much easier than that, or so we thought in our usual beer-fuelled utopian haze.

I attacked the best of the two bikes and had all parts re-plated, cleaned up the tank and seat, re-plated the spokes and reassembled the wheels and about a month later had the first bike sold for a modest profit. The crazy fool who bought it was a 'Ducatisti' of some financial worth, having a shed full of rare and exotic 'replicas' and collectibles. The Regularita fitted in just great in his investment portfolio.

The second bike proved to be much more of a challenge, starting with the seized engine, friction-welded drive sprocket,

delaminated fibreglass tank and much more. Yes indeed, much more!

A year later we have the bike finished, having spent way too much money on the engine in particular. Worst part was when our local machine shop dropped in a 'replica' Wossner conrod. It didn't fit so they machined out the cases – which killed the primary compression. Not that it really mattered on such a dog of a bike, as it was slow and peaky at the best of times. It just turned 'slow and peaky' into slower and peakier. And did I mention the missed gears? I don't know where half the gears went. We have some experience with early Ducatis. My son has rebuilt a 350 Sebring to near-concours condition so he knows his way around Ducati gearboxes and paraphernalia, but this bike was a total mystery.

Parts never appear until after you need them, as was the case recently when an NOS rod and all the bits appeared for a very fair price, about half what I paid to have the local machine shop screw things up. Damn.

So the bike is finished. It's a fabulous show bike that draws an amazing amount of attention because of its name and rarity. But by any measure Mr Cathcart's assessment of the Ducati was far too generous. It's an absolute animal to ride with a powerband thinner than a politician's list of completed promises. But we love it and most likely will never sell it. We ride it on nice sunny day here on the bald-arsed windswept wheat-covered prairies of western Canada.

Al and Michael Gill



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REGOLARITA REDUX CONTINUED



I was the technical and service manager at Ducati UK (Coburn and Hughes of Luton), and visited the 1974 Milan exhibition with Mike Coburn, Clew Hughes and Ray Elliott who were the directors. I saw the 125cc Regularita on the exhibition stand, however I had seen this bike in the Ducati factory's experimental department on previous visits to the factory. I visited the Ducati factory on a fairly regular basis as part of my job as Ducati UK's technical manager.

Franco Farne, the head of Ducati's experimental department who I knew quite well, asked me what I thought of the bike. Franco knew that when I was working for BSA I had ridden in three ISDTs and won two gold medals, so I said to him it would be nice to test it. Franco then introduced me to Snr Cosimo Calcagnile who was the commercial manager of Ducati. It was decided that when I was next at the factory in Bologna I could indeed test a Regularita.

During early January 1975 I was back at the factory. I had taken my riding gear with me, and one afternoon I was given a prototype to ride around their test track. My first impression was that it was a nice bike, however the power came in with a rush at about 6000rpm and disappeared at about 9500 rpm. The Regularita would have made a very good 125cc road racing machine. Ducati did not have an off-road track so it was not possible to check out the handling and suspension of the bike.

A week or so later it was agreed between Coburn and Hughes that they would supply a specially prepared Regularita at a very special price for me to race in British enduro events

and also to develop it for me to race in the ISDT to be held in the Isle of Man later in the year. Again I travelled to the Ducati factory, and this time the bike that they were going to supply was prepared for me to spend a day in the hills behind the factory with one of their test riders. On the hard fast dusty tracks the bike was fast and it handled well, however there were no muddy rutted tracks so it was impossible to judge the handling and suspension, the gearing was also a little high I thought and it took a lot

of revs to get it off. I needed to ride it in some British and / or European enduro events to be able to sort it out for the muddy moorland bogs and rutted tracks that would feature in the Isle of Man ISDT.

The Regularita was sent to C&H in Luton. They registered it LRO 809 P (the same reg as the bike that Alan Cathcart tested for your article) and I started to test and develop it in the UK. The first serious test was on MoD property at Pirbright in Surrey. They had a track that was very rough and very muddy and featured a deep water splash. Within a short while I had discovered that the engine characteristics were total unsuited to the machine. When you needed to plonk through deep mud and water you had to slip the clutch; when you needed power the power came in with a big rush and the rear wheel just started to spin.

The bike was very good on the fast rutted tracks. It handled well but it was obvious that the rear Marzocchi shocks were not up to the job, and later I fitted Girling gas shocks. I rode the bike in a number of British enduros and an enduro event in Holland. I spoke to the factory a number of times about the totally unsuitable engine characteristics. Eventually they sent to me a revised (their words) cylinder barrel, cylinder head and piston – the transfer ports had been altered and the combustion chamber had

been modified. These new components made the engine more suitable and usable for muddy conditions, however the engine was still more suited to a road racing engine!

As I continued to develop the Regularita I changed the handlebars to – I think – Renthal bars; the original Ducati bars were not strong enough and bent! We modified the wiring system and moved the ignition switch out of harm's way.

The bike was prepared for the ISDT in the Isle of Man, and shortly before the event I gave it a shakedown run in the British Army enduro championship at Bagshot Heath. I won the event outright but I was an invited guest not a member of Her Majesty's forces, so I was the best guest expert!

During the ISDT the bike started either first or second kick each morning. It ran very well and I kept on Gold medal standard until the Thursday afternoon. I was riding down a very fast moorland track, flat out in fifth gear when the engine seized. I woke up in Ramsey hospital a few hours later. I had banged my head and was suffering from concussion, and I had a rather large gash on my left arm. I was discharged from hospital a few days later.

When I was back home I stripped the engine, the problem was that the big end crankpin had broken although there was still plenty of oil around the crankpin and bearing cage. Ducati told me that they had never seen a broken crankpin before, but they would, wouldn't they! The rest of the engine was OK. Ducati sent a new crank assembly, the bike was reassembled and Coburn & Hughes sold it to a Irish customer.

When the bike was originally supplied from Ducati it was in the Red colour, not the Green of the bike that Alan Cathcart tested in Spain. I have no idea if the modified cylinder barrel and cylinder head is still with the bike.

Pat Slinn, Poynton, Cheshire



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NOT SO EASY



Having read the article on the Brightspark EasyCap magneto condenser replacement in RC185, I ordered a C03 condenser for my B33 as I have been experiencing the same problem. Neil Cairns made it sound so easy. He didn't mention anything about disconnecting the old condenser, which makes the whole job a lot harder. With removing the magneto and armature, quick-snip the old condenser or remove the old condenser, put it all back together, refit the mag and then retune it, the procedure was not such a quick job...

Pete Jeffries, member 7540

TRIDENT TIMES



This photo was taken at this year's Classic TT on our Tridents at Old Laxey seafront. A lovely spot and now with two excellent cafés. I'm lowering the tone on my T150, Pete in the middle is on the 1976 T160 which he's owned since new. The Island was the first real run for his bike since a total nut and bolt rebuild. The three of us riding over the mountain with our wives on pillion was one of those very special biking moments.

All three Tridents have had wheelbarrows of cash thrown at them, and all sport Dave Madigan electric starters and Mikuni carburettors from

Hinckley Triumphs. The bikes are transformed with these mods. My T150 never returned better than 37mpg with rebuilt Amals. With Mikunis I get over 50mpg along with easy starting, perfect tickover and no stinky fingers from tickling the Amals.

A wise man once said that a Trident is a challenging ownership experience, but once sorted they are rewarding and reliable bikes. This is absolutely true, and surely no bike makes a better sound at full chat?

John Rimmer, member 3891



STANDS TO REASON

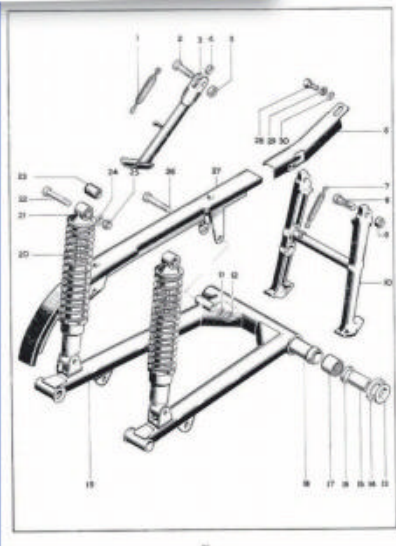


I have a 1971 Triumph T25SS which I am rebuilding, and followed Frank's articles on the BSA 250 and found them most helpful. I wish to fit a centrestand. Triumph didn't fit one or list it in their parts list. I recall Frank mentioning a stand that fits the 250s which came from a bigger Triumph twin. Could you please tell me which model and year?

Nigel Jenkinson

BSA certainly listed the stand for the B25SS – I don't have a Triumph parts list handy so can't check that. Here's the page from the BSA book, along with a photo of the B25SS. I used a stand from a T140, which appears to be identical apart from the lifting extension for the rider's foot – I simply sawed that off. You can see it in the photo after the surgery. Any post-1971 Triumph or BSA big twin appears to use the same stand.

Frank



EASTERN GRIT

Just finished reading about the CZ in RC186. They really are better than most people give them credit for. In 2016 I paid £70 for a shed-find 471, off the road for many years. I recommissioned it as cheaply as possible and set off on a wee jaunt, across Europe and the Baltic states to Finland. I collected the furthest-travelled awards at rallies in Germany and Finland and made dozens of new friends along the way.

Sadly the bike seized in Germany on the return leg, but I was still most impressed by its performance...

Rob Bassett, member



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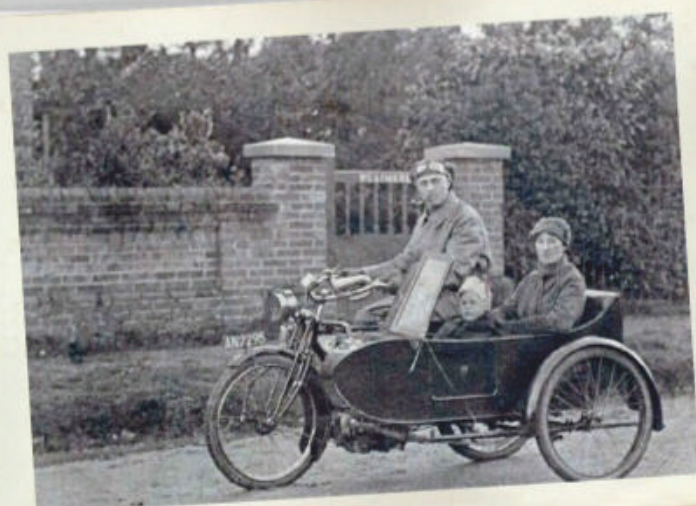
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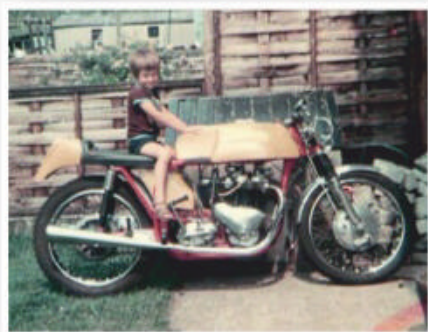
FAMILY ALBUM

Does motorcycling run in your family? RC readers share their relatives' encounters with old bikes...



The first photo shows my grandfather, William Roberts, with my grandmother Gladys and my uncle Phil, aged three, in the sidecar. It was taken in 1916 in Eling, near Southampton. I would really like to know the make and model of the bike. The other image is of my father, Peter, sitting astride Phil's 1930 Model G Royal Enfield 350. Uncle Phil had grown up a bit by then! This was taken around 1933 in Langland near Swansea.

Paul Roberts, member 10,626



Here are two items I made earlier: my son Michael and my Triton. The bike used a featherbed frame and a Triumph 6T Thunderbird pre-unit engine. The bike is long gone now, and wish I still had it.

John Davies, member



Here's my father-in-law, Peter Hayles, in the late 1950s with his Norton ES2 combination at Madeira Drive at Brighton. Peter is 93 now and still tells us stories of what he got up to whilst working his patch on the A23. Happy days.

Derek Ansell, member



A couple of photos of my daughter: the first was taken just over 50 years ago while pillioning on my 1962 ex-Metropolitan Police LE Velocette. The second in 1978 when she was a bit older, on my 1975 MZ 250. Married to an Aussie, she now resides in western Australia and rides a Honda 250, but is getting interested in getting a Royal Enfield 650 Interceptor for her 60th birthday. It should be useful for overtaking the road trains on those long, straight, two-way Aussie roads. Starting her early on bikes was obviously a good idea!

Mike Knowles, member 8882



This pair of photos show my BSA Bantam. Initially with my grandad when it was new in about 1953, and then for my first ride about 50 years ago.

Terry Edwards, member



SEND YOUR SNAPS!

We'd love to share motorcycling photos from your own family album. So if you've got a snap of grandma and grandad on the old combination, or maybe your father on his first bike, then send them to us for this page. There may be

prizes for TP's favourite photo each month...

It's probably easiest to take a digital image of your original pic and send it by email to RCHQ@RealClassic.net but you're equally welcome to send actual photos (but not prints of

scans, sorry) by post, and include an SAE if you want them back.

And don't forget the younger generation – photos of your offspring and their close encounters with classic bikes would be wonderful as well!



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Indian

SPRING

The American bike industry went through turbulent times after the First World War. The Indian Motorcycle Company desperately needed a fresh new model to spearhead their 1920 range, and Charles B Franklin gave them the Scout...

*Photos by Kay Eldridge of FocusedImage.com.au,
Tim Pickering and the RC RChive*





A stunning machine from any angle, the Indian Scout is pure Americana

Once the dust had settled after the Great War, it became clear that America's thriving motorcycle industry would struggle to survive in the 1920s. The initial abundance of multiple pioneer marques contracted massively. The pattern followed the same path as the British industry, where dozens of one-man workshops collapsed or consolidated into major concerns. But America always does things big – including industrial decline. At its pre-war peak, the USA could count nearly a hundred motorcycle marques but after WW1 there were only three left standing.

One of those was Indian, and the Springfield firm certainly struggled to adjust to the post-war situation. Before the war, Indian was the biggest motorcycle manufacturer in the world with the most up-to-date factory. When the firm's annual sales exceeded 30,000 machines, Indian expanded their plant and employed 3000 workers, ready to build up to 100,000 motorcycles a year. They couldn't have predicted the global sales slump which followed, nor the peculiarities of the American motorcycling market which diverged significantly from its European counterparts at this stage.

Motorcycling hadn't established its Stateside *raison d'être*, and cash-strapped customers figured that Henry Ford's four-wheeler was a more practical proposition than any motorcycle. In 1916 you could

buy a Model T for just \$360 – much the same price as Indian's Powerplus 1000cc V-twin and sidecar. Indian's attempt at a utility motorcycle, the Light Twin 250, was marketed as 'a motorcycle for everybody' but only if 'everybody' had \$250 to spare. Small wonder that more than 90% of Indian's manufacturing facility stood idle and sales slumped.

If Indian's lightweights were felt to be too flimsy, but the beefy Powerplus was too much of a handful for the average man on the Chicago omnibus, then the company obviously needed a middleweight. Enter the Scout for 1920 – Charles Franklin's make or break moment at Indian. The sidevalve 600 Scout incorporated ideas he'd been playing around with for some time, squeezing most of the positive aspects of the Powerplus into a more compact package. The Scout's twin-cam 42-degree 37 cubic inch V-twin engine output around 10bhp, enough to propel the 340lb machine most of the way to 60mph. When you consider that front brakes hadn't yet been adopted as standard equipment, 55mph probably feels like plenty fast enough!

The Scout used a helical-gear primary drive and a three-speed hand-change gearbox. It was nearly five inches shorter than the Powerplus and some 90lb lighter. Although the motor left the factory in a modest state of tune, it wasn't too hard to tweak. It certainly accelerated faster than its 1000cc stablemate and – even in standard spec – only gave

away a few mph to the bigger bike at the top end. Effectively, the 600 Scout defined a new middleweight market and became the Indian of choice for the sporting rider.

Although this advert emphasises the Scouts, and does its best to bury the Chief behind its sidecar, the heavyweight machine significantly outsold the lightweight sportsters at this time. But the Scouts still got all the attention...



There's enough going on here to keep an enthusiast satisfied for several lifetimes



Above and Below: 'The helical gear primary drive is a masterpiece of engineering,' said Titch Allen. 'There is an idler gear between engine cog and clutch gear so the engine runs the correct way.' The rod running across the primary drive operates the multiplate wet clutch which is activated by the rocking foot pedal



Buoyed by this success, Franklin built a bigger version – the Chief – which met with customer approval, and then tried again with another single-cylinder lightweight – the Prince – which did not. The market recovered in the middle of the decade but Indian couldn't afford to take a breather. Excelsior



The Scout's steering is an 'imperturbable heavy-castored layout which ignores obstacles and rides confidently over bad surfaces.' Titch Allen found it had 'a marked tendency to remain upright' and that the Scout 'does not lend itself to playing at racers in twisty lanes. It would make a wonderful sidecar outfit hitched to a sports chair...'

spotted a gap in the range and introduced a new 750, which promptly started winning on track against the heavyweight 1000 and 1200 twins. So for 1927, a 745cc / 45" Scout arrived, but that was just a stopgap ahead of the much modernised machine which appeared the following year.

The Scout 101 was blessed with 22bhp straight out of the crate, good for 75mph, and it responded enthusiastically to cam and carb enhancements. It had a stronger frame, longer wheelbase, more rake, a lower saddle and – hurrah! – a front brake. Nimble and rugged, it might've been heavier than its predecessor but the 101 was rapid, reliable and extremely accessible. It was a great all-rounder, says RC regular Tim Pickering, co-author of *Franklin's Indians* (and whose expertise I shamelessly raided for this feature: thanks, Tim).

'Franklin turned his klutzy-cute cygnet, the short-frame Scout, into an elegant swan,' says Tim. 'The 101 stands out as Franklin's masterpiece and its historical significance endures to this day.' However, the 101's

admirable build quality was also its Achilles' heel, given the wider economic climate. 'It was actually too good and its cost of production was thus too expensive for its middleweight price point.'

Right on cue came the Wall Street Crash, the Great Depression, several changes in Indian's management and a takeover by Du Pont, which culminated in significant streamlining of motorcycle production. The last 101 was built in 1931 and thereafter, as part of a cost-saving scheme, the 1932 Scout adopted the same chassis as the heavyweight Chief. This Scout lengthened by four inches and so lost its agility. It gained 60lb in mass but gained nothing in power, depriving the model of its sporting prowess. It became a utility machine for an austerity era. That might've been the end of the Scout story...

...but for a last burst of brilliance, a star turning supernova before its flame finally flickers into oblivion. The cost-cutting measures did the trick. Although Indian built very few bikes in 1933, less than 1700, they were actually back in profit. This meant that ►



The 101's trailing-link front end features a telescopic anchor to counter torque reaction to accommodate the new, 8" brake, with leaf-springs that can be adjusted for variable loads

a new Sport Scout model could be unleashed in 1934. Adopting components from various models across the Indian range, this machine could so easily have been a budget-build, parts-bin special – but instead it was a rip-snorting success.

The hard to assemble gear-driven primary drive was replaced by a chain. Conventional girder forks replaced leaf springs at the front end. The long wheelbase frame used the engine as a stressed member. The 750 engine output 22bhp before tuning, which would push the 450lb machine to 70mph.

'It was a feisty hot rod built on English lines with a non-unit motor,' Tim told me. 'For

actual riding, the Sport Scout is more up-to-date, tuneable, rideable and fixable than the 101. It has a glorious history in its own right. Any Sport Scout in 45" form is a rev-happy machine that snarls. They have a racing pedigree, and can be hotted up.'

Indeed they can – a Scout Sport took top honours at the very first Daytona 200 in 1937 and they were considered to be smokin' hot stuff on dirt track circuits. Nor does the Scout story end with the outbreak of WW2, and there's a whole other story to tell about the weird things which happened post-war, before Indian shut up shop in 1953. But we'll save that for another day and return to Franklin's masterpiece; the Scout 101.

The machine you see here is a 1929 example, owned by Gillian in Australia. The Scout's been nicknamed 'Patti' to reflect her fabulous patina. Patti is one older lady who isn't ashamed of her age...

'Patti was a very special find,' says Gillian, 'our first vintage Indian motorcycle.' Gillian had advertised for Indian-related memorabilia, and received a reply from someone with an entire motorcycle, previously restored in the 1970s and now for sale. Inconveniently it was on the far side of the country (Australia being quite large, it seems), but Gillian and her husband Robbie weren't put off. The Indian was the perfect excuse for a romantic getaway.



It's not easy to beat a proper hooter



Titch Allen rode a similar Scout, back in the day. Even with his experience, it wasn't easy; 'the transposition of controls was a tremendous strain'. The left twistgrip operates the Schebler carb, which features manually adjustable jetting



Titch Allen suggested leaving the clutch half in and half out 'almost like auto transmission. You can put it in top and concentrate on that accursed left-hand throttle.' He found the controls tricky, but appreciated the Scout's quality. 'These Indians are extremely well-engineered,' he said, 'better so I would say than our own machines.'

THINKING OF BUYING?

As we had an Indian expert available, we shamelessly exploited Tim Pickering's expertise on the subject of actually buying a Scout to ride today.

'All Scouts are good,' he says, '...for their times. Even the much-maligned Standard Scout. But in modern-day riding conditions? The 1920-1931 Scouts are at the limits of practicality for riding on modern roads. This is due to total loss oiling (you have to carry a tin of special oil with you to ride any decent distance); the 600s have a realistic cruising speed of 45mph; and before 1927-28 they ran on clincher (beaded-edge) tyres and had no front brakes.

'I once had a rear tyre let go on my '25 Chief and it was a sphincter-loosening moment. The flat-tank Scouts are charming bikes for organised club runs, after being trailered into the countryside in search of a road environment that resembles 1930. But don't routinely commute into the city on one. All this applies equally to the 750cc 101 Scouts, except they get a front brake, drop-centre rims, and have a tad more poke. And importantly... are much better looking.

'For post-1934 Scouts most of the mechanical stuff needed to keep them running is available and, if skilled, you can fit a

WLA or even Sportster bottom end, although tinware is like rocking horse excrement. For the 1920s stuff, you had better buy one already complete and running or else you will be spending years trying to complete a jigsaw puzzle by scouring the globe for rare and expensive pieces.

'WW2 Indians are certainly around, but were never built in the same numbers as H-D WLAs. They are "entry level" Indians but still mucho expensive. Ones still in original military trim are super rare and hence also super expensive. The 741 is essentially a de-bored and de-stroked Sport Scout with a bit more ground clearance, and is as slow as a wet week. Think BSA M20 slow. It's charming, but (to borrow a phrase) "never has so much noise been generated for so little pace." A 741 will cost more than double the asking price of an equivalent condition military Matchless G3 or Ariel W-NH and does roughly the same job, almost as well, with the added fun of hand change and foot clutch.

'There are many worldwide Indian specialists. In the USA, there's Starklite and Kiwi Indian. In the southern hemisphere, parkerindian.com and Hanes Engineering in NZ. Honourable mention also goes Indian Parts Europe in Denmark, sponsor of several recent Indian record attempts, stockist of repro 1920s Scout parts from Czech republic, and the friendliest most-helpful-with-advice Indian shop owner on the planet.'

So how much will you actually pay for a later Scout in the UK? We've found a few

coming up for sale in recent months. The first was a 1928 Scout 101, an unregistered barn find with a 750 engine which needed lots of work and was missing quite a few parts. The seller was asking £21,000.

The next was a 600 from 1929 which has been in the UK for a few years. It's fully registered and on the road. The seller reckons it 'runs well and the engine sounds lovely. All the electrics work. Has mellowed nicely.' It sold at auction for £21,375.

Then there's a 1942 bike, described as a Scout 741b. It's had a recent nut-and-bolt restoration and the seller says it starts first time, every time and drives exactly as it should.' Strangely, he didn't bother registering it so it comes with Nova docs (which might raise concerns about getting it correctly dated). No one bid at £22,500.



Indian made well sprung and considerably comfortable saddles



Titch Allen's recommended set up was 'with the clutch set to slip slightly and the ignition retarded slightly' which produced 'a range of 15 to 65mph in top gear. If you play your cards right in traffic you need hardly ever use the gearbox.'

'For our wedding anniversary we flew to Sydney, and spent the whole three days looking at the Indian Scout and visiting the people who had been involved in its original restoration. Cyril, the seller, made it very easy for us. He already had an offer on the bike, but it was going to be window dressing at a local business and he wanted it to go to someone who would ride it. In the end I made the deal as Robbie was umming and ahing about the substantial sum of money, for a bike that wouldn't start!

'Cyril was a true gentleman and actually sold Patti to us cheaper than the offer he had already received, as he could see our passion and knew we would get her going and spend many happy hours on her. We kept in touch and he had no regrets about selling the bike to us.'

That was 2015, when the Scout was much as you see it now, missing a few important things like the toolbox, battery box, a couple of covers and... sparks! Local Indian specialist Rob Patrick worked his magic and got the Scout running, and it's been firing reliably ever since. Gillian sourced the missing components and added a Garmin GPS odometer which doubles as a speedo 'so I don't get a speeding fine' and keeps track of the distances travelled 'so I can plan fuel stops'.

Initially, the Scout was intended to be Robbie's bike. While the couple were relaxing at a marque rally, Gillian started complaining that he was having all the fun on the vintage machine while she was on a modern Indian. 'So Robbie gave me a challenge: if I could start and ride Patti around the showground then I could have her. After a lot of kicking, sweating and a

few choice swear words, I did indeed get her started and rode around the grounds with a lot of grinding of gears.

'I now feel quite confident on her but it took a lot of lessons on riding a bike with a left-foot clutch, right-hand shift, left-hand throttle and right-hand advance/retard. Don't get me wrong, I still stuff up, especially if I've been riding a conventional bike a lot, but whoever says they don't make mistakes when riding these vintage bikes is either a liar or a poser.'

Oh yes, riding an Indian (or indeed any motorcycle) of this vintage can be extremely challenging – and rewarding. 'One thing that causes some consternation in bystanders is that she has a total loss oil system,' explains Gillian. This means that there's often a pool of oil oozing from the bike's undercarriage. 'I have lots of people saying there's something wrong with your bike!

'The other problem with the total loss system is that, on occasion, I have been known to give slightly too many revs when taking off from the traffic lights. This can cause quite spectacular fishtails when the back tyre hits the oil.

'So Patti definitely has her moments, but on the whole she is super reliable and a joy to ride. She is easy to handle for a petite 5'2" female rider. I can put my feet flat on the ground, she has a low centre of gravity and is easy for me to manoeuvre at slow speeds. I'd say to anyone who's looking at a similar purchase – accept the challenge and master a foot clutch and suicide-shift motorcycle: you'll be glad you did.

'Riding vintage Indians is the most fun you can have on two wheels, and Indian riders are a real family.' **Rc**

INDIAN SCOUT 101

Indians

Irish motorcycle racer Charles B Franklin, designer of the Indian Scout & Chief



Harry V. Bucher, Jim Pickering, Stan Diamond, Harry Havelin

FRANKLIN'S INDIANS

For in-depth insights into this fascinating marque and the many motorcycles built by the original Indian company, we recommend this extensive and well-presented study of designer Charles B Franklin and the machines he created. It doesn't simply focus on the Scout and Chief (although they get a lot of coverage) but sets Indian's history in context with the social and industrial situation in the early decades of the 20th century. So you're not overwhelmed by dry facts, dates and tech specs, but presented instead with a genuine overview of the pre-war motorcycling world.

Not just an invaluable research resource, but a fascinating read in its own right.

Available in softback from Veloce.co.uk, for £30.



The machine you see here is owned and ridden by Gillian in Australia. The Scout's been nicknamed 'Patti' to reflect her fabulous patina. Patti is one older lady who isn't ashamed of her age...

Cotton Tales



Triumph's smaller unit twins are as compact as most smaller capacity engines, so inevitably they found themselves fitted into smaller bicycles, with often excellent results

Rick Howell was thinking of assembling a TriBSA suitable for long distance trials. But then he discovered a ready-built off-roader with a Triumph twin engine in Cotton's competition chassis...

Photos by Rick Howell / Nick Brown of AJS Motorcycles

'Cotton never put Triumph engines in their frames – is it a special? That's a statement and question all rolled into one that I often hear at events where classic bikes and riders congregate.

'Yes, they did... but yes, it kind-of is,' I reply, my usual slightly tongue-in-cheek answer to those observers as they cast their eyes over the scarlet red 'street scrambler'.

Of course putting a Triumph twin engine into a different frame, most notably the Norton featherbed, was once almost a national pastime, and all varieties of frame and Triumph engine combinations spring to mind. Before

this machine arrived I'd been trying to locate a suitable Triumph twin to slot into a spare BSA rolling chassis I happened to have and create my own Tribsa suitable for long distance trials. Then fate took a hand and I noticed an advert offering this very much-admired and well-known (within the Motor Cycling Club anyway) example of a Cotton-framed Triumph. As I already had a LDT bike, an SP370, I wasn't really that interested, so I mentioned it to a friend who I thought was in the market for a Triumph-engined machine. As it turned out, he wasn't.

The more I looked at it, the more interested I became, and once I'd worked out how to square the asking price I put in an offer. It did

ON



Tight curves and a bash plate – perfect off-road kit



The engine started out intended for a 1970 T100R, has been detuned a little and boasts a Morgo filter to prolong active life



help that I knew both the bike and the seller, so I went to see it and in a trice it was mine. Gulp. Would I get on with it? Was it worth *that* much money? What would Mrs H say? What might Mrs H *do*? One moment I'd been 'just popping out for a pint of milk and a loaf of bread' and the next (well, it was four hours later) I was going home with a Cotton Triumph instead. How did that happen?

Cotton was one of those small firms that started from humble enthusiastic beginnings with a good idea – a stiff triangulated frame designed by Frank Willoughby Cotton – that rose to prominence in the 1920s with IoM wins and star riders and a consequent boost in sales to such an extent that new premises in Gloucester were needed. Their reputation helped Cotton to survive the depression years, but missing out on the military motorcycle contracts of the late Thirties, and the suspension of civilian motorcycle production during the war years, meant the works at Quay St could only produce spares while most of the production floor was taken up with other military work instead.

Post-war the Cotton frame looked dated, being rigid with girder forks. Despite a planned programme to revive production with a 500cc vertical sidevalve twin, as well as continuing with 500cc, 350cc and 250cc JAP-engined singles, times had moved

on. Finally Frank decided to retire. Meanwhile, JAP sales of roadster and industrial engines dwindled to such an extent that Villiers took over JAP in 1957.

In 1954 Cotton was revived by more enthusiasts, Monty Denley and Pat Onions who, as with many other firms, saw the revival of making lightweight motorcycles with the Cotton name as a means of earning a crust. The premises in Gloucester, occupied since the heady days of the early 1920s, found themselves building lightweight road machines with Villiers 2-stroke engines. First came the Vulcan, then others including the Cotanza which used the British Anzani 250 2-stroke twin.

By the end of the 1950s a range of on- and off-road bikes was being produced. In

1961 the Cougar scrambles machine was introduced and a works team put together, including riders Bryan Goss, Fluff Brown and John Draper, followed by Jim Timms, Billy Jackson, Pat Mimms and Ken Messenger. About this time televised scrambles literally opened up a whole new audience to the sport and Cottons were back in demand. They also got involved in road racing and in the process helped develop the Villiers Starmaker engine. Fluff Brown was Cotton's development engineer as well as one of their riders; his skills in the research department (a tin shed at the back of the works yard) hadn't gone unnoticed by the Cotton management or Villiers.

This resulted in the Telstar and Conquest

Rick's friend Steve also campaigns a Tri-Cot in MCC events



Here's Rick at Blue Hill on the Land's End Trial. If you like the sound of long distance trials, check out themotorcyclingclub.org.uk for details of the MCC's annual events



Reliability is always important. Hence a decent air filter and simple electrics



Renthal meets Marzocchi by way of Alp...



Steve's bike was manufactured by F-B AJS motorcycles in January 1999 and was the last of the factory-built bikes. Seen here at Plusha

racers of the early 1960s and Derek Minter's 250cc British Championship win in 1964. As TV audiences tuned in to Saturday afternoon scrambling, riders like Arthur Lampkin and Dave Bickers became household names. Arthur and his brother Alan were enticed away from European champions BSA and signed to ride for Cotton for a season in 1964 to campaign the Starmaker-engined Cobra in the 250cc world championship. To be honest, the Lampkins didn't get on too well with the 2-stroke engine nor the leading link forks. To honour the Lampkins' existing commitments to the 500cc class, Cotton shoehorned a 500 Triumph engine into a strengthened 250 Cobra frame, fitting it with the Lampkins' preferred Norton Roadholder forks. They had some success but didn't win the world championship and before the season's end they returned to BSA.

The 500cc Triumph-engined scrambler found a ready market with the competition privateers of the day. It was produced in small numbers by Cotton and sold as a replica frame kit.

In 1967 Villiers, now part of Manganese Bronze's Norton-Villiers, had decided to limit production of their engines to their own AJS range – the Stormer – employing Fluff Brown and Andy Robertson, another Cotton rider. This

left Cotton, Greeves and others without engines, having to source alternatives from abroad. Cotton survived in trials with the Minarelli-engined Cavalier trials model, but by the 1980s, and despite some interesting developments with Rotax and EMX, Cotton ceased to exist.

By 1974 NVT themselves had gone while Fluff Brown had bought out the AJS name and taken over the Stormer series of machines. In the 1990s with the rise in interest in the classic off-road and racing scene, he began making replicas of the 1960s Cottons like the Telstar racer, Cobra Scrambler and Starmaker Trials. Fluff's son, Nick, joined the business and in 1992 discovered a genuine Cotton Triumph not far from the FB 'works'. He decided to build some replica rolling chassis and around 20 were made over the next few years (see sidebar), with blue, red or scarlet bodywork. Price in June 1997 was £2911, with the customer expected to supply his own 3TA or 5TA or Daytona motor.

My machine is a rebuild of a Nick Brown replica based around an original 1967 Cotton Cobra frame and swinging arm. It was completed in 1996 by classic scrambler Andy Rowett before being used for long distance trials. It has a TiG welded twin down tube cradle and rear subframe, Falcon shocks, British Hub laced into an 18" rear, Akront



Back in the mid-1960s, Arthur and Alan Lampkin rode Cotton Scramblers with Starmaker motors. Here's Fluff Brown with one of his creations, which inspired the next generation of Triumph-powered Cotton specials



Fluff Brown was still building bikes under the AJS banner in the 1990s when his son Nick joined the firm and created his own Triumph-engined Cotton scramblers



rims, Pirelli MT43 tyres, Marzocchi forks and 21" Maico front wheel – as is typical of these type of bikes, various cycle parts get changed over the years to suit the owner and his or her preferences. To prove the point, the headlamp comes from a Beta Alp 200 and it's fitted with modern handlebar mounted switchgear.

The fuel and oil tanks and air filter / sidepanel are in GRP – the slim 1.5 gallon fuel tank and low gearing means the range is just 60-70 miles. The tank is suffering a bit with ethanol but still holds fluid successfully. There's another fuel tank, made from a more ethanol-resistant form of GRP, in my garage waiting to be fitted.

The engine is a 1970 500cc T100R Daytona motor with low compression pistons and 5TA head, so it sports a single Amal Concentric carburettor. Sparks are looked after by a Boyer Power Box and oil health is improved

with a Morgo in-line filter. The oil capacity is just four pints and any overfilling (there's an internal 'fill' mark about halfway up the tank!) inevitably means lots of oil all over the rear wheel from the tank breather.

Starting is a simple, guaranteed affair despite there being no choke. Flood up and gently kick through. It soon ticks over without any hesitation. A stainless siamese exhaust breathing through a small silencer makes the bike sound throaty but not loud. Apart from the top end, the engine is fairly standard as far as I am aware. The gearbox is showing some signs of wear; third will jump out of gear when going from second occasionally and there's also quite a whine when in third. It'll need investigating at some stage but, beyond that, the bike is a very willing performer and easy to live with over a long distance, both on and off the tarmac.



Physically it's a light, slightly tall frame with a wheelbase of 55", a seat height of 34", with 9.5" ground clearance and weight of just 265lb. Compare that to the standard 1969 Triumph T100C's 337lb and the 1973 oil-in-frame Adventurer's 322lb.

Then there's the other machine you see here. Steve's bike was manufactured by F-B AJS motorcycles in January 1999 and was the last of the factory-built bikes. It was sold in June 2000 and converted to left-hand gearchange. It then changed hands a couple of times before Steve bought the bike in January 2010. He used it for a while with



Akront rim, British Hub, fruity exhaust!



The 2019 Land's End Trial. The Plush start

the left-foot gearchange but felt it was a bit crude and so he returned it to the correct right-foot change. The engine is from a 1963 T100SS and, despite numerous attempts to fix the problem, it still leaks oil. They all do that, sir. His GRP oil tank gave up the struggle some time back and he's replaced it with a bespoke alloy number. I'm considering the same treatment by knocking up a pair of copy tanks in alloy. It won't be cheap, but it will give me peace of mind.

At Easter 2019 these two Cotton Triumphs both took part in the MCC's famous Land's End Trial. Despite the unseasonably warm and dry weather, the trial was as uncompromising as ever. With the previous Easter's Exmoor blizzard still fresh in riders' memories, main trial riders set off from three different locations to start a 100 mile road run to converge at the proper start at Bridgwater.

Following an hour's rest, riders set off in the dark taking the twisty back roads to ride to various off-road sections through the night and into the following day. The trial culminates at the breathtaking coastal scenery at Blue Hills, St Agnes, where the two sections test the most determined riders and drivers. With timing, skill and not a small amount of luck, reaching the finish in one piece can be rewarded with a finisher's certificate, and ideally with a potential medal. Nothing is guaranteed until the results are published of course!

The Cotton's light weight with plenty of Triumph twin gusto gives the bike a real

edge on MCC trials, amply demonstrated by former owners' performances with gold medals and class wins a-plenty. The problem now is that *this* owner has to try and replicate that! Previously I've used Bantams (hard work but surprisingly good once sorted), a Serow (excellent 9/10 all-round performer), an MZ 250 (really needed serious work and then would still be just *wrong*), a CRF230 (a Serow with go), a rigid G80 Matchless (apologies to aficionados but not appropriate; like trying to ride a lump of lead), an XT600 (competent but hefty and, well, *dull*), an SP370 (heavy but fun, slightly weird steering, very 1970s). A varied bunch. The Cotton Triumph is as light and manoeuvrable as the Serow but with heaps of grunt and a beautiful noise. And trad Brit, with that slight fear of potential self-destruction in the back of your mind. Hey, it keeps you awake... what's not to like?

Steve and I rode separately with our various team-mates and we both finished in good spirits. We climbed all the bogey hills without issue (Crackington, Warleggan, Hoskins, BH2) and had no mechanical problems either. As I was riding a new-to-me bike I was conscious of listening out for any tone, or note change, or noise as I rode. The Tri-Cotton and I covered over 500 miles on- and off-road in 28 hours. To be honest it was a comfortable ride, and not wearying in any way other than due to riding continuously for so long. The machine rides on the road quite happily at 45-50mph, it blasts up hills with gusto and it

trickles along with a whiff of throttle along the back lanes in a perfectly lazy manner. Just about ideal for a long distance trial machine. That front brake could be better, but in combination with the rear and light weight, stopping isn't an issue.

A Cheney or Rickman Métisse 500 would be a direct contender, although both of those use plated oil-in-frame platforms whereas the Cotton is painted and has a separate oil tank. As a guide, Cheney and Métisse Triumphs come up for auction regularly and are generally priced at £6k to £9k. Many seem to have some form of spurious connection to either the 1960s ISDTs or Steve Mc Queen, so bolstering their desirability factor. If a Cotton-Triumph were to come up for sale then it seems that the rarity alone would command a similar price tag. About 30 were made *in total* by Cotton and F-B AJS, and this rarity enhances the desirability – certainly amongst Cotton enthusiasts – who are, of course, amongst the most discerning riders. I've joined the COEC so I'm bound to say that, right? **Rc**

THANKS TO

Bob Smith at the Cotton Owners and Enthusiasts Club (cottonownersclub.wordpress.com) for checking my facts and figures. Bob once owned this Cotton so he knows a thing or two about them, including using this one on MCC trials



Perfect for the lanes of Devon

NICK BROWN'S BIKES



It was a local friend and talented club rider, David Heaton, who approached my dad and wanted a Cotton 250 replica to ride in the then relatively new sport of pre-65 scrambles. We talked about it and agreed a price and went about building two Cobra replicas. I built the frames and frame jigs, my dad built the engines and sorted the front forks. Initially we built two bikes, one for David Heaton and the other for me to ride. I seem to remember we rode them for the first time at a Bath classic meeting.

I had been used to riding 370 Stormers and soon fancied something

bigger to ride than the Cobra 250. I learned about the Tri-Cot and fancied building one. I tracked down an original frame to borrow. I believe it was Ally Clift who brought about the original idea of a Tri-Cot.

The first Tri-Cot I built had a steel fabricated airbox and air filter, and later I built a GRP unit based on my steel design. I used a Norton Commando oil filter and Boyer ignition. The first replica Tri-Cot had low right and high left exhaust; later I designed a compact siamesed exhaust.

Nick Brown, AJS Motorcycles Ltd



By the barn at Tockenham Wick, on the 2019 White Horse Trial

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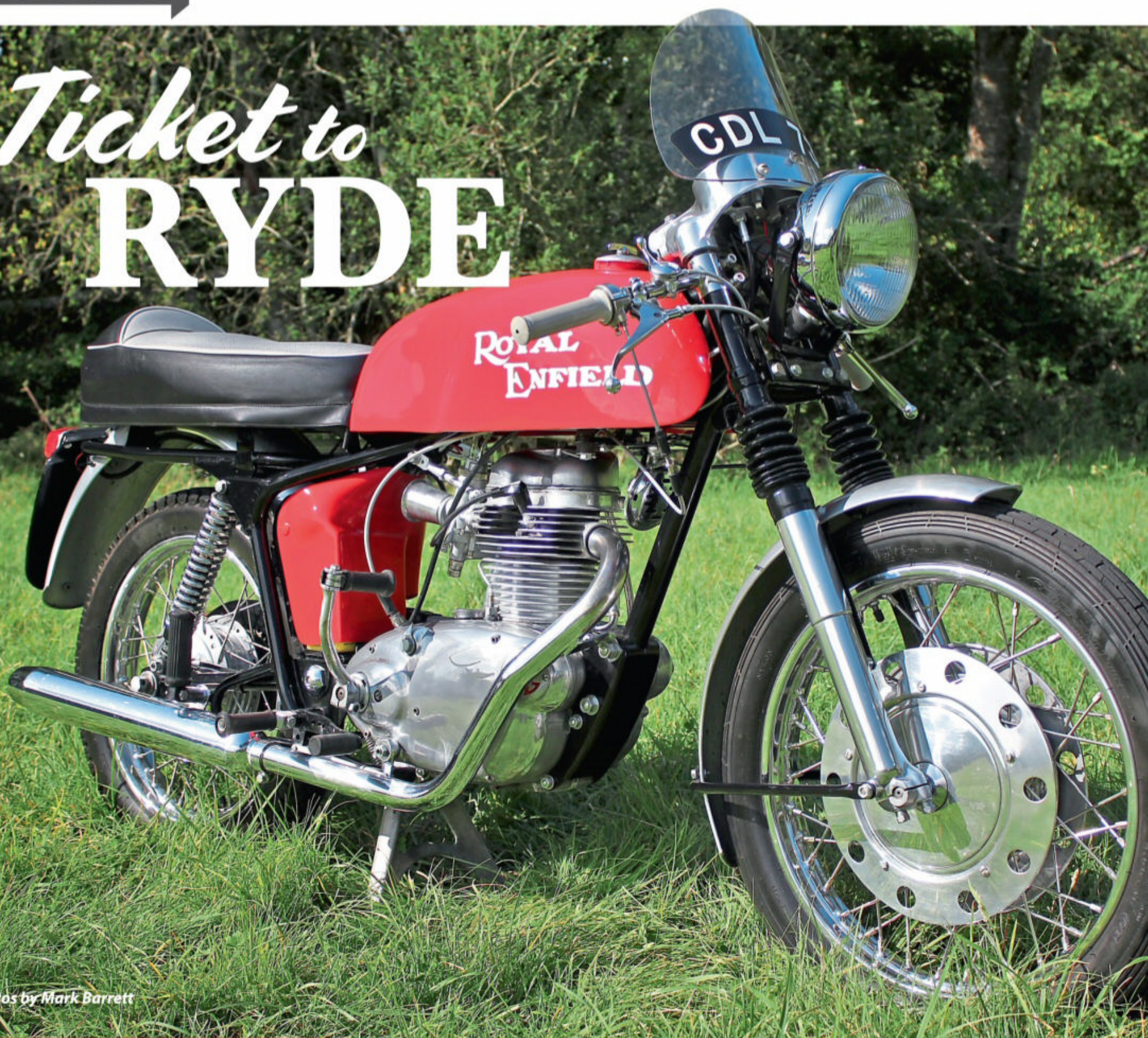


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Photos by Mark Barrett

A strange discrepancy on an Enfield's paperwork inspired Raymond Proudley to don his detective hat and seek out its original owner on the Isle of Wight...

When you set out to buy a classic bike you can never be too sure where the journey will take you. That has certainly proved to be the case with the Royal Enfield Continental GT I bought last year. Much has been written about this little bike and I am sure many readers are familiar with its idiosyncrasies and history.

I had wanted to own a Continental GT for many years – since the days when they were launched – but at £270 in 1965 they were way beyond my budget and I consoled myself with a £30 Bantam. When I saw this one for

sale I made what was for me an easy decision, and brought it from its last owner in Essex to where I live in the New Forest.

Fortunately the bike was in pretty good



Front brake looked more effective than it actually was, and the big 'cooling rings' added little apart from visual impact

condition, so I have been able to restore it without too much drama. It needed a full top end rebuild; some electrics, tyres and gear linkages, all completed with much help from Chris Smith of Dorset. Burlen supplied a new carb as the original was tired. This sounds like a thousand other restoration stories but things got a little weird when I started to go through the paperwork.

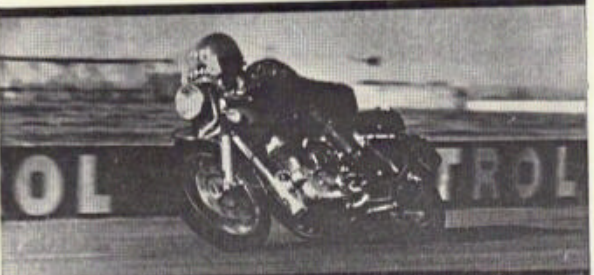
The original logbook showed the bike was registered on the Isle of Wight, to its first owner (Andy) on 13th January 1965. The thing about the Continental GTs was that they were known to only come in one colour, red, the colour it is today. The weird bit, and biggest surprise, was that the logbook showed the bike's original colour as Yellow/Silver. Surely they were all red? My bike also had polished alloy mudguards, not the red you would expect. The previous owner explained that he never got round to

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Motor Cycle News Nov. 14th 64.

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painting them, so I knew I had to get this sorted.

I joined the REOC and spoke to the chairman, Graham, to find out what was known about my bike before making any decisions on which colour it should be. Graham was a font of useful knowledge and confirmed that my bike is the only known survivor of just three Continental GTs that left the factory in 1964. He also confirmed that the first few GTs were supplied with alloy guards – so that saved me a few bob! Graham was as puzzled as me as to the colour of the bike – they were all red unless it was some sort of special order. I spoke to numerous marque specialists / enthusiasts but no one could shed any light on why the bike was shown as yellow in the log book. A letter in the VMCC magazine failed



Drive side of the engine is pretty busy, with the world's most impressive breather pipe and a vertical tacho cable. Another breather is in evidence – oil retention was a priority

to elicit any information.

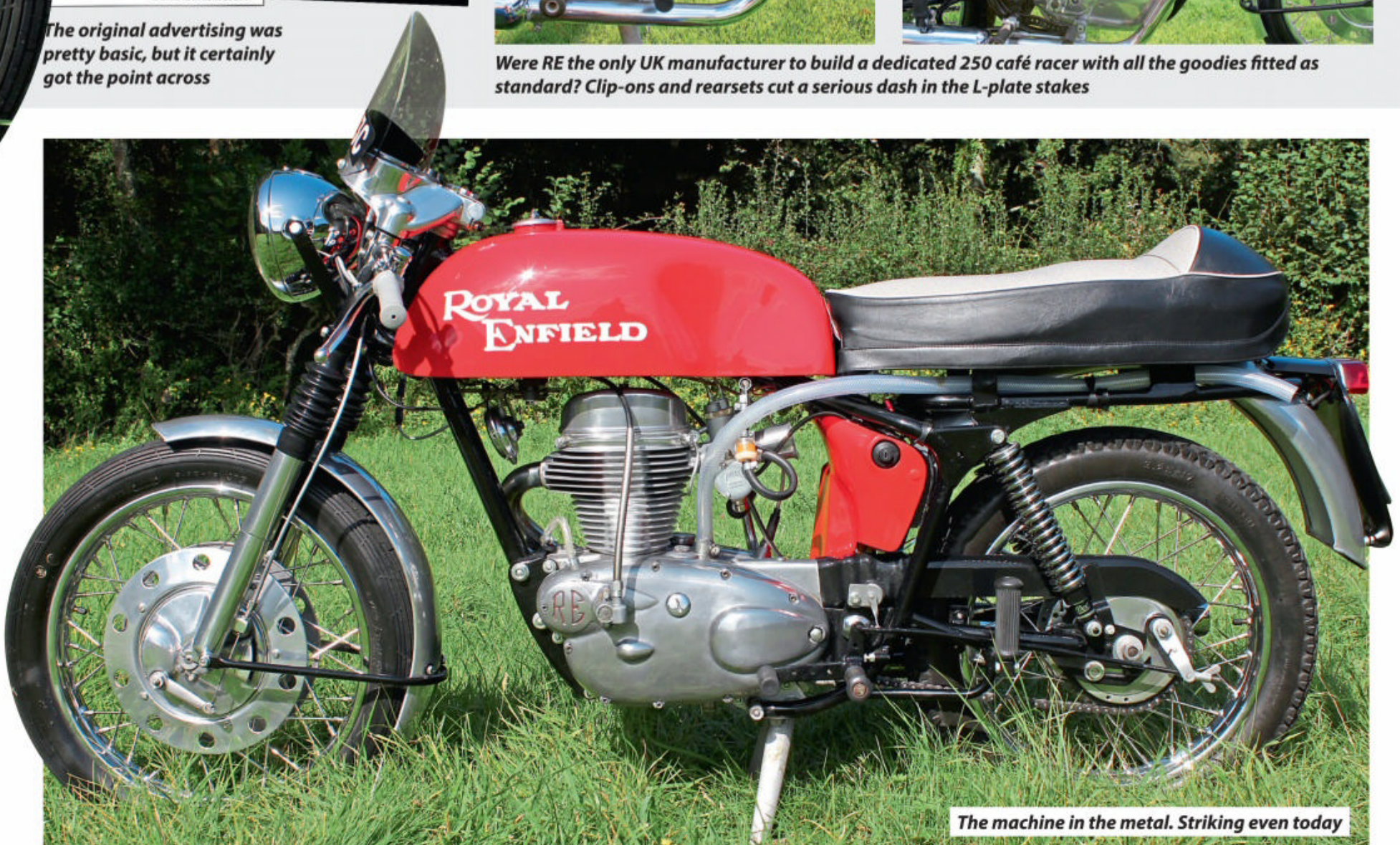
It occurred to me that the one person who could help would be the first owner. The dealer, Kelleways of Ryde, had closed ➤



Were RE the only UK manufacturer to build a dedicated 250 café racer with all the goodies fitted as standard? Clip-ons and rearsets cut a serious dash in the L-plate stakes



The original advertising was pretty basic, but it certainly got the point across



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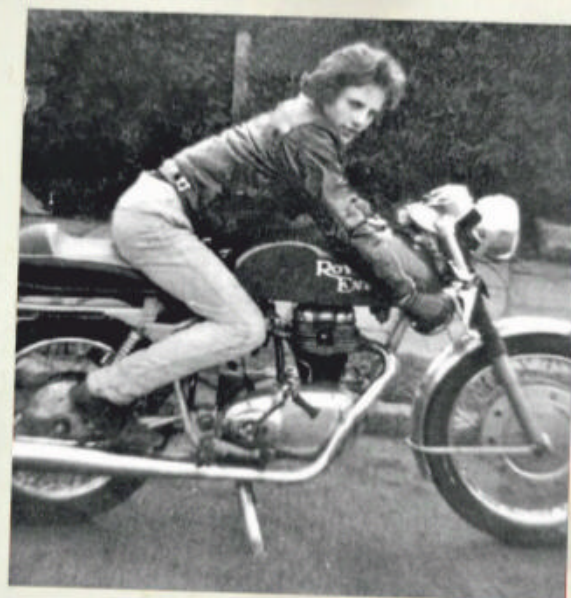
many years ago. As the surname was unusual I started to search the internet. After many hours I found a link which looked like it might be Andy or a family member and left my contact details. To my amazement I got a call from Andy, who was able to confirm he was the first owner and he provided a wealth of information.

Andy ordered the bike in November 1964 as he was inspired by the speed / reliability run that RE undertook as part of the bike's launch. The much documented run, from John O' Groats to Land's End, was completed

in under 24 hours. Andy wanted the bike in time for his 16th birthday in January 1965 and so his bike was dispatched in December 1964. Andy never noticed that the dealer had filled in the colour as yellow on the log book – it was a red bike from the day it was made! This meant I could stop looking at yellow paint charts. When delivered, the bike's frame was silver, the mudguards were alloy and the bike didn't have a battery cover. Interestingly, Burlen were able to supply the original agreed build sheet from the end of October 1964 which showed the carb jet set-up differed on the Continental GT to its final spec of March '65. The original set-up was configured to maximise top end speed.

The frame is now black and an aftermarket battery cover has been fitted. Other than that, the bike is ostensibly as it was on the day it left the Royal Enfield factory.

Andy provided a picture of himself looking the biz on the GT in the summer of 1965. He also shared his memories of the bike, including runs out with other bikers where he was more than able to keep up with the big bikes on the twisties. He recalled hiring the bike to a mate while he took his girlfriend to



Then and now! Same bike, same rider. The Conti's original owner, reunited with the bike he bought new in 1964

the pictures; enterprising all round!

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Andy was keen to see the bike again, so we met up. He was very happy to be reacquainted with his first bike after a gap of 55 years, and we re-enacted the picture from 1965. Naturally enough, Andy wanted to buy the bike for a second time and after much soul searching I agreed to let it go back home. Funny how things turn out – but for a mistake about its correct colour when it was originally registered, this Continental GT would never have found its way home! **Rc**



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RADICAL RECYCLING

Northampton was once home to a small number of motorcycle manufacturers. They may be long gone, but a local enthusiast keeps the flame alive by building rather remarkable machines from the bits of other bikes. Richard Jones tells his tale...

Photos by Richard Jones and Roy Davis

I first saw one of these machines howling up Sunrising Hill during the VMCC Banbury Run. It wore a BSA logo on the tank but the engine looked and sounded like an ear-drum breaking four-cylinder two-stroke. I spotted it next at the Rose of the Shires Run but once again this elusive machine and its rider escaped me.

Fortune favours the persistent and I finally made contact with rider / builder Roy at a Northampton VMCC event.

And so it was that he and I sat outside the canal museum in Stoke Bruerne, drinking coffee and talking about his remarkable trio of motorcycles.

Roy was brought up a family

steeped in the lore of the BSA Bantam. His grandfather was a bookie's runner and rode around the nearby villages on a 125 Bantam, accompanied by his terrier – which rode pillion. Roy's father Maurice worked at British Timken and used his Bantam to commute. So it comes as no surprise that Roy and his three brothers had a Bantam field bike in the mid-1960s. After the Bantam, Mr Davis senior acquired a 197cc DOT for his boys, followed by a Greeves Challenger with its leading link forks.

Compared to the Bantams and DOT, the Greeves was a fearsome beast which 'frightened the hell out of us' and Roy recalls that there were times he hoped it wouldn't start. 'It was a ball of fire!' After that his father found a 'sparkling' Ariel Arrow being sold by a colleague for £20. Roy removed ➤



WARNING! This Bantam may not be entirely as it left the factory

the Avon touring fairing and with some tuning the Arrow became an ideal machine for a teenager. By the time it came a cropper in a close encounter with a Morris Minor, Roy had progressed to the rocketships of the era, a Honda F1, followed by the iconic Kawasaki Z900 and Z1000.

Despite being seduced by the attractions of the Orient, Roy maintained his connection with British machinery in the shape of a 1947 Ariel Red Hunter 500. He acquired the big single in an interesting fashion, meeting a young lad who had entered a shed in a manner that wasn't entirely legal. There he'd found 'an old motorbike rusting away'. Armed with the information, Roy made contact with the owner, one Alfred Barker. The Ariel had been purchased from Reg Spokes, a well-known motorcycle dealer, and Barker had competed on it at the Castle Ashby House Sprint as well as the Wild and Woolly scramble at Blisworth.

At the latter event Mr Barker and the

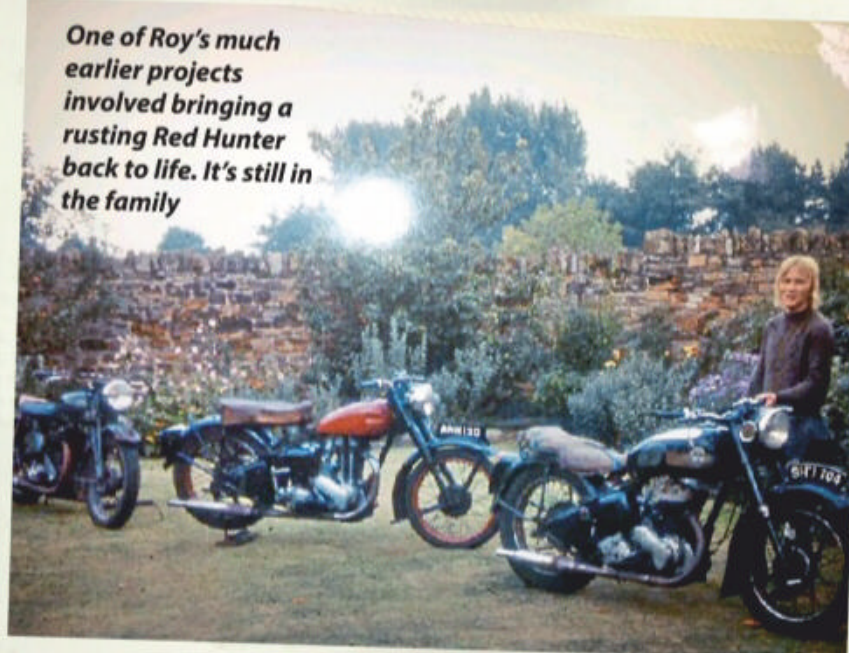
Ariel parted company and the bike's forks had become somewhat bent. When Roy eventually asked Barker how much he wanted for the Ariel, rusting away in a shed, he was told he could take it away – and duly did so. After some relatively minor restoration the Red Hunter was put back on the road and is still ridden by Roy's brother, Colin, to this day.

While enjoying bikes in his spare time, Roy was employed at Glanfield Baldet, a car and motorcycle shop. He naturally worked on the bike side along with Mick Hemmings who was just starting up his own Norton business. They parted ways and Roy stayed in the automotive field as an apprentice mechanic, travelling to work and technical college on his Ariel Arrow. At British Timken he joined the tool room involved in fabrication work, and he continued to work

in engineering until he retired in his mid-50s. Finally this trained engineer had the time to indulge his passion for motorcycling, and needed a project for winter.

'I want to calm it down a bit – I wanted something that's not a rocket ship but it's got to be easy to start as you get older.'

A two-stroke seemed to be the answer and, providentially, his brother Colin had given him a BSA Bantam frame. Why not combine this with that other machine fondly remembered from his youth, the Ariel



One of Roy's much earlier projects involved bringing a rusting Red Hunter back to life. It's still in the family



Roy's first special was fairly conventional: a BSA Bantam frame with an Ariel Arrow engine. We love the version with the expansion pipes!



Arrow? Roy had seen a special at a show which was constructed along these lines so it was clearly feasible. Roy knew a chap with lots of Arrow spares who was selling engines for £30; they were seized and in a state, with one engine showing signs of its internals exiting through the side of the case. This did not discourage our engineer, and Roy acquired several of these spares as well as a number of barrels from eBay.

Roy set to and built the machine that still sits in his garage to this day, although, as seems to be the nature of Roy's projects, it didn't remain in the same state for long. The original had a single carb but Roy enjoys 'making progress' on his bikes so an additional carb was installed along with crankcase reeds, electronic ignition and expansion chambers. The crank was built up using 125 rods by Gerry Pell of the Bantam/LC tuning world.

Roy's tuning meant there was nothing below 8000rpm, but once past this the machine would absolutely howl up the road. Changing up through the four-speed gearbox meant that it dropped out of the powerband, however, and things slowed down markedly. Roy concluded 'Why thrash it when it was just for tinkering around?' Plainly a new project was required, one with a bit more get up and go. 'We all need more grunt and poke,' explains Roy, 'so I thought I'll put an RG500 engine in a Bantam.'

For those of you who don't recall the 1980s (I try not to) the RG500 Gamma was a two-stroke race replica, directly inspired by the Suzuki factory racing machines which won seven world GP titles. The road machine, like its race brother, was 498cc of water-cooled, rotary-valved two-stroke with its four cylinders arranged in a square, unlike Honda's typical V formation. The short-lived



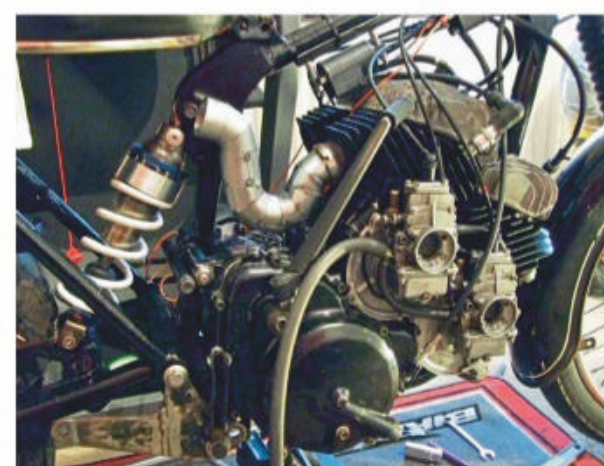
Four into one will go, then. Squeezing a considerably modified 4-pot Suzuki engine into a frame intended for something considerably less must have been entertaining



Starting point. There are parts for more than a single engine here!



Bespoke adaptor plates mated two sets of Ariel Arrow cylinders and heads to a 1984 Suzuki RG500 bottom end, with much CNC and milling work required. Top left we have an Ariel Arrow cylinder yet to be used by Roy. Below that are untuned adaptor plates with M8 cap heads to fit to the RG crankcase using 5/16ths UNC/UNF Ariel studs. On the right are tuned rough cut plates and cylinders. Note the early transfer tunnels are very small and the tuned ones are getting quite big

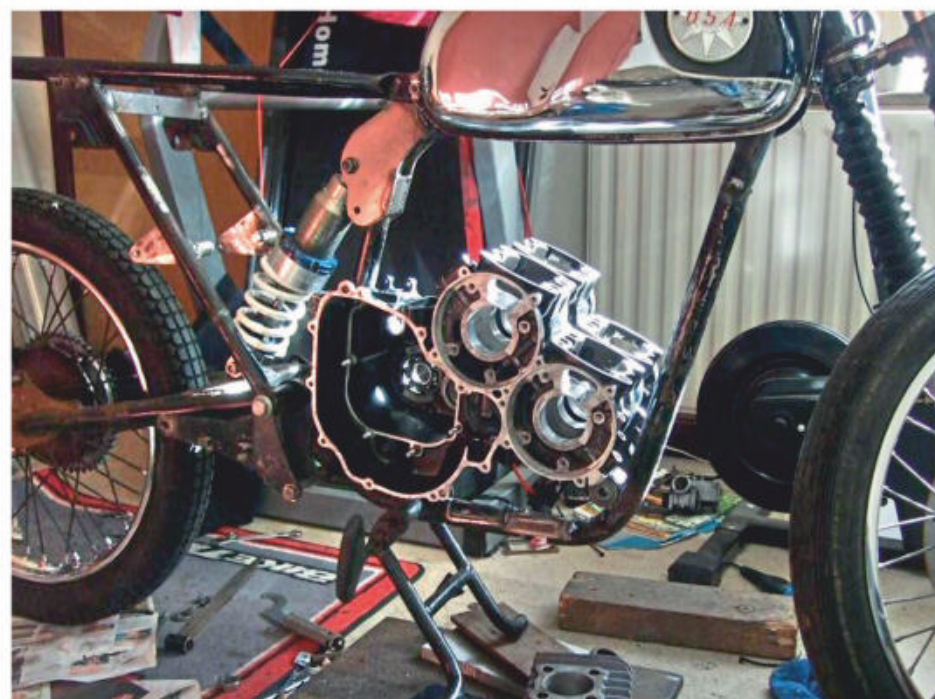


Half of the carbs are in place, and an exhaust is starting to grow

doesn't get much sillier than that.'

Carpe diem – Roy rummaged around his loft where there were plenty of Suzuki RG500 parts and some Ariel Arrow cylinders. Vernier calipers in hand, Roy reckoned he could graft Ariel Arrow cylinders and heads to an RG500 bottom end and insert the whole into a Bantam frame. Roy is extremely self-effacing about his engineering ability and you could almost believe that this unique motorcycle and engine just came together with very little conscious effort. Those of you who know ➤

RG streetbike, built for just two years in the mid-1980s, produced 95bhp – not necessarily the natural powerplant for a BSA Bantam. The rare RG500 is now sought after and really rather valuable so even using spare parts for a special was a daring move. As Roy says 'it



Square-4 powertrain fits into the BSA frame with hardly any effort (or not!). Strange that BSA themselves didn't update the Bantam like this



Coming together. Observe how the monoshock has been replaced by twin shocks



Basically a Beezer. In some sense. Observe the 3-shock rear suspension...

about these things will be more than aware how complex such an undertaking is. To me, it seems almost like sorcery.

Roy enlisted his pal, precision engineer Mark, who was 'a bit flabbergasted' but who got involved when he saw the photos of the work in progress. After careful measurements, Roy returned to Gerry Pell and his piston books to source a suitable set. A local firm made bespoke adaptor plates to allow two sets of 1960 Ariel Arrow cylinders and heads to be mated with the 1984 RG500 bottom end. Much CNC and milling work was required to achieve what appears to be a minor miracle of engineering.

The top pair of heads had to be low compression as the vertical plugs used with a high comp head would have fouled the petrol tank, but the lower pair of cylinders had space for the high comp plugs. The engine capacity worked out at 475cc, which is close enough to be called a '500'. The four carbs feeding

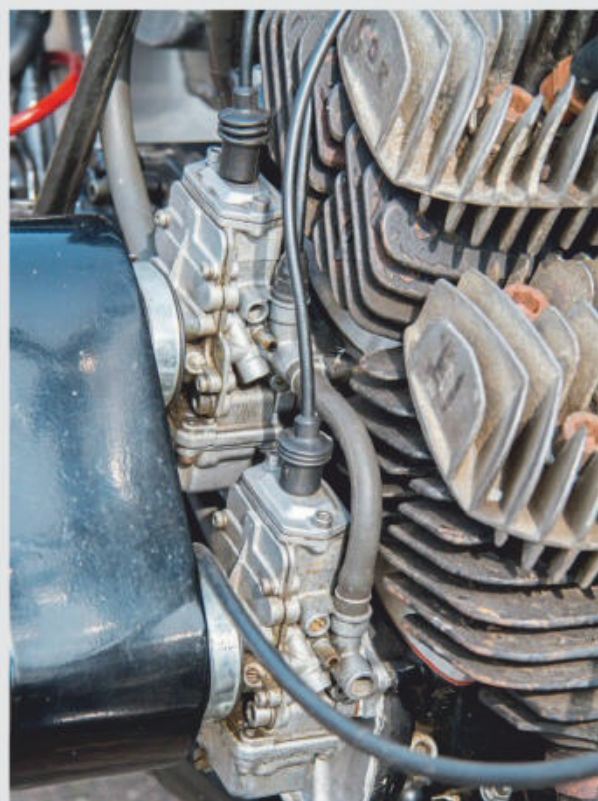
One of Roy's remarkable special-build two-strokes, howling up Sunrising Hill on the Banbury Run



the engine came from the RG500 and feature 100 size jets instead of the original 120s, a change Roy feels is important for ease of use. The Suzuki also donated its six-speed gearbox and clutch, although the latter had to lose a couple of plates as it was too much for the engine. Roy fitted a racing electronic ignition with CDI, which means no battery to worry about; lighting comes courtesy of a capacitor when the engine is running. Roy couldn't resist incorporating a set of 'vestigial' points which confuses many, including yours truly!

The engine needed a frame and friend

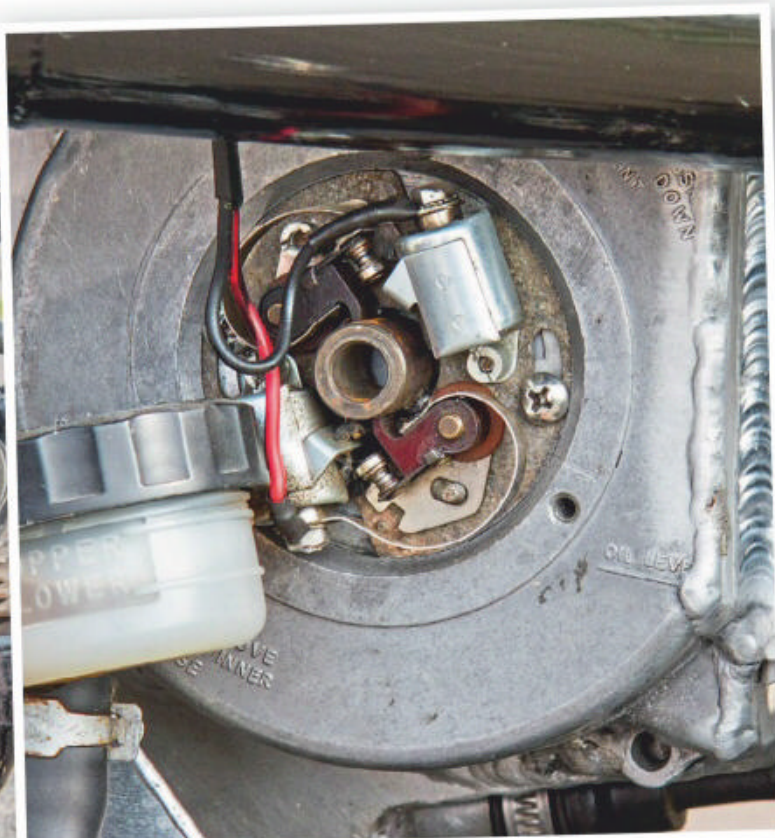
Mark, overcoming his initial scepticism about the project, altered the 1968 Bantam frame to allow the engine to slot in then welded the engine mounts in place. He also fabricated those handsome black expansion chambers and donated the 1970 Suzuki GT185 front wheel which was in his garage. The front forks also came from a Suzuki, this time a GN125. The stanchions were too long so were trimmed by 75mm. A new fork stem was fabricated which converted the GN to Bantam bearings.



The Ariel-Suzuki engine is fed by four carbs from an RG500, rejettet for easier running



Squeezing all this engine into so little space meant there wasn't room for the longer spark plugs on the upper pair of heads



The super stroker uses a racing electronic ignition system; the old-fashioned contact-breaker is just there as a talking point...

Like the forks, the front and rear discs and calipers came from eBay. Roy bought several calipers but thought a single one would be insufficient at the front, so he set to looking for a wheel with a twin disc set-up. None were immediately available... so why not add just a second caliper? Hey presto: it worked. Yet another unique feature which adds to this machine's individuality.

At the back end, the swinging arm also came from a Suzuki GN125 modified for the new rear wheel, the twin shocks are from another eBay purchase and the cast back wheel is from a 250cc Aprilia with a 160 tyre, again featuring a single disc but this time only one caliper. Surprisingly, a spoke front wheel and a cast rear doesn't look out of place and just adds to the bike's overall character.

In the early days Roy ran it on a petrol mix, but the RG500 had an oil pump so it

made sense to use this and avoid the messy operation of the petrol/oil mix. However an oil tank was required, so step forward Paul Holland who not only fabricated the aluminium sections at the back end but also produced an oil tank to fill the space Roy had identified. This is another very clever piece of work because Paul took an Ariel Arrow primary chaincase, cut and then folded it and 'made it into a decent sized oil tank, just for the quirkiness of it, the silliness of it.'

Other parts have been similar recycled: Roy took the head bolts from an Ariel Arrow, cut them up and welded them on as chain adjusters. 'You cut up some Ariel Arrow and BSA Bantam bits and use them as much as possible,' says Roy. 'Not that anybody's ever going to know that the particular tube on the swinging arm is BSA Bantam or the adjusters are Ariel Arrow. It's quite nice to put some of the British history into it.'

The project took three months over a winter to build, with Roy working pretty much full time on it. Not that he was freezing out in his garage every day; Roy built the bike in his living room!

So what's it like to ride and own? The stroker starts wonderfully well; just two kicks when it's cold in the morning and one kick thereafter. Roy attributes this to the carb jetting – easy starting was one of his key requirements. It avoids awkward moments and means less effort for aging legs, but took a little while to achieve with the original high-comp set-up. Starting on cold winter mornings was a nightmare, so Roy subsequently eased the compression on the higher-comp pair of cylinders.

On the road 'the handling is quite good. It's grunty without being really quick. It's a short-shifting, grunty bike at the moment.' Roy stresses that correct tyre pressures are essential to ensure that the steering remains neutral. I followed him from Northampton to Stoke Bruerne and enjoyed the sight of four contrails from those expansion chambers until the engine warmed up. The engine note is raspy with an exquisite snap, crackle and pop on the over-run but even a passing horse was unfazed by the noise. You can hear it revving in anger on YouTube (search for BSA Bantam RG500 Ariel Arrow).

There are, of course, some issues with owning a bike like this. Carole Nash were rather taken aback when confronted with such a chimera which, of course, didn't fit into any standard category. However, they were able to come up with a policy at a reasonable premium.

The original Bantam petrol tank, designed for a single-cylinder 125, doesn't really have the capacity to take a four-cylinder 500 very far. Although there is a reserve, Roy needs to know when he's travelled ➤



No, your eyes don't deceive you. The single front brake disc is gripped by two calipers



The rider's view is not entirely traditional Bantam



The oil tank started life as an Ariel Arrow primary chaincase, cut and folded in an extreme example of metal-bending magic

40 miles so he can start looking for a fuel station. He's acquired a GPS-based odometer to keep track.

If you look hard you will see a symbol on the motorcycle which Roy told me was a Transformer from the popular film series, appropriate as the bike seems to regularly transform. Roy originally used a monoshock on the back end but realised it ruined the twin-shock appearance that was characteristic of the period he was aiming for. 'I'd lost that look out of the corner of my eye that it's a British bike from the 1960s,' he explained. So twin shocks were fitted, but Roy retained the monoshock as well – and this entertaining eccentricity excited much comment and some opprobrium. People ask in astonishment why it's got three shocks, but Roy just enjoys the joke. 'I've got three shock absorbers on it, I've got four cylinders on it and I've got two calipers on the front – where do you want me to stop?'

A year later he went even further and built another radical transformer, just so the Arrow-based bike wasn't completely one of a kind. 'I wanted to do another one in case

anything happens to that. A lot of things we own are a bit personal and if you ever lose it then it's going to be hard on the head.'

For the later special he again used an RG500 bottom end and Bantam frame but with Peugeot Streetfighter scooter cylinders, giving a 413cc four. Signs of Roy's sense of fun are also evident on the later creation and the stickers on the Peugeot are there to say 'This is a humorous motorbike – do not take this seriously'.

Which of the pair does he prefer? 'The more modern one at the moment – it's a bit quicker. But the Arrow just wants tuning a bit and it'll be just as good as the other one. It's got old fashioned porting, but for knocking around with the vintage boys and hooning about it's perfect'. That's Roy's next plan, in fact, to tune the Arrow-based engine to give it a bit more speed. Then he'll have a bike which looks like something which could've been built at an old British factory, but which turns out to be super special.

'I wanted to make something which looked like a BSA Bantam out of the corner

of your eye and then, all of a sudden, it's not a BSA Bantam. No it's not; yes it is; no it's not. It's got a four cylinder engine in it. I wanted to build something that was absolutely bonkers, humorous. And it's turned out to be a really lovely motorbike.' **Rc**



Roy's super-stroker is a work in progress and, as the Transformer logo suggests, it just keeps on changing

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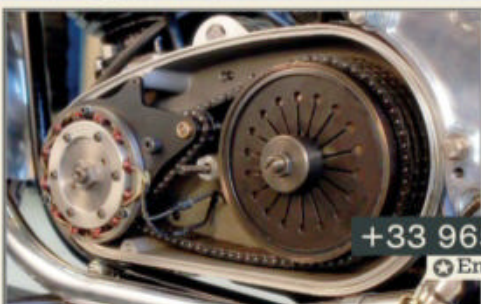
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60-year-old Gerald Dyer of Pinxton had been badly injured in an accident when he was 19. This subsequently led to him developing severe arthritis. Despite having had 2 hip and 1 knee replacement he was still taking 8 strong, prescribed painkillers a day for pains in his hands, wrist, arms and shoulder. He was finding his work as a part-time butcher and farmer difficult and had not renewed his shooting licence as he found himself unable to stand the pain of bearing the gun on his shoulder. When he read about Bioflow magnetic therapy wristbands in Countryman's Weekly he decided, "Anything was worth a try," and ordered a Bioflow Elite from Jenny Ryan. He was delighted to receive the product the next day and is thrilled with the difference it has made to his life.

Gerald says, "I've now stopped taking the painkillers which were causing me a lot of problems with constipation and haemorrhoids. I'm able to go shooting again and yesterday I spent from 6am to 5.30 pm cutting a hedge with a billhook. Although I felt a bit stiff, I could not have even considered doing that before I got my Bioflow wristband. I've never taken it off and it's the best thing that's happened to me since getting married."

Gerald bought his Bioflow wristband from independent distributor, Jenny Ryan
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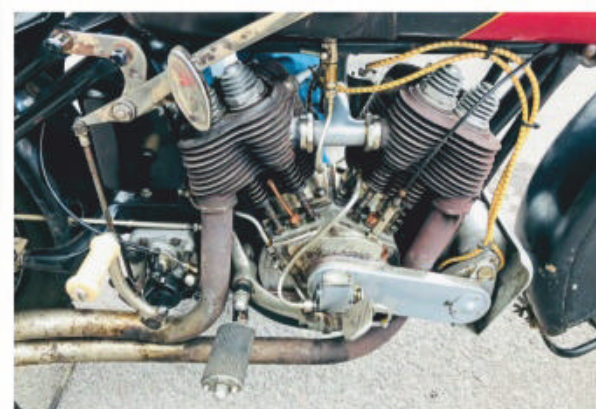
FOSSIL HUNTING

You're about to buy your first really old bike. Not just a classic, but one which qualifies as truly vintage. Paul Miles has been there and done that, and dishes the dirt on buying your first girder-forked or hand-change motorcycle...

Photos by Paul Miles and Richard Jones



A flat tanker. So-called because its tank is flat. This is a Norton, as you can probably see, and is an OHV single



This tank sits atop the frame so is a saddle tank. Observe the engine: a V-twin with side valves and therefore rare and desirable. It is also fitted with a hand-change gearbox



The earliest machines bear a strong resemblance to a pushbike fitted with an engine. There's a reason for this. Delicious Triumph sidevalve single fitted with the world's most complicated carb and no gears at all. A true challenge

You've read some articles, seen social media pictures of normal-looking people appearing to extract abnormal levels of fun from very old bikes and thought, perhaps, there might be space in your heart and shed for a vintage bike. Congratulations! You've made the first steps towards improving your motorcycling experience immeasurably. But before you rush out and spend your money, pause for a moment and consider these questions...

What is a vintage motorcycle?

The term 'vintage' means different things to different people. To some, it simply means secondhand (think 'vintage' clothing), although it would be quite a stretch to consider a 1999 Ducati as being either old or vintage. The Vintage Japanese Motorcycle Club (VJMC) accepts it as being

a Japanese motorcycle being fifteen years old or more... but they're young and foolish, so we forgive them.

Americans, raised without the benefit of a history, would certainly consider a 1972 Honda to be vintage, but for the definitive description we need to follow the rules, set in stone by the Vintage Motor Cycle Club. Founded in 1946, with the aims of preserving and keeping historic motorcycles on the road, the VMCC is the largest old motorcycle club in the world with over 14,000 members.

The previously referred to 1970s Honda would actually belong in the VMCC's 'classic' category and a late 1990s Ducati remains inflexibly 'non-eligible'. Sorry about that. No, to be correctly classed as a true vintage motorcycle, your pride and joy needs to have been manufactured *before* 1931. After that date they would be classed as 'post-vintage' machines.

You meet the nicest people on an outing for those vintage flying machines. Sammy Miller, pottering gently along (!) aboard a fine Grindlay Peerless



Many early machines have two fillers to their fuel tanks. The other one is for the oil, which also lives inside the tank. Repairing these tanks when they leak internally is all part of the delight, we're assured

This is the first and one of the most important things to bear in mind when making your choice, as any motorcycle built after 31st December 1930 is not a qualifying machine for official vintage events; at least, not VMCC sanctioned ones. Hey! Don't shoot me, I'm only the messenger and don't make the rules.

How old to go?

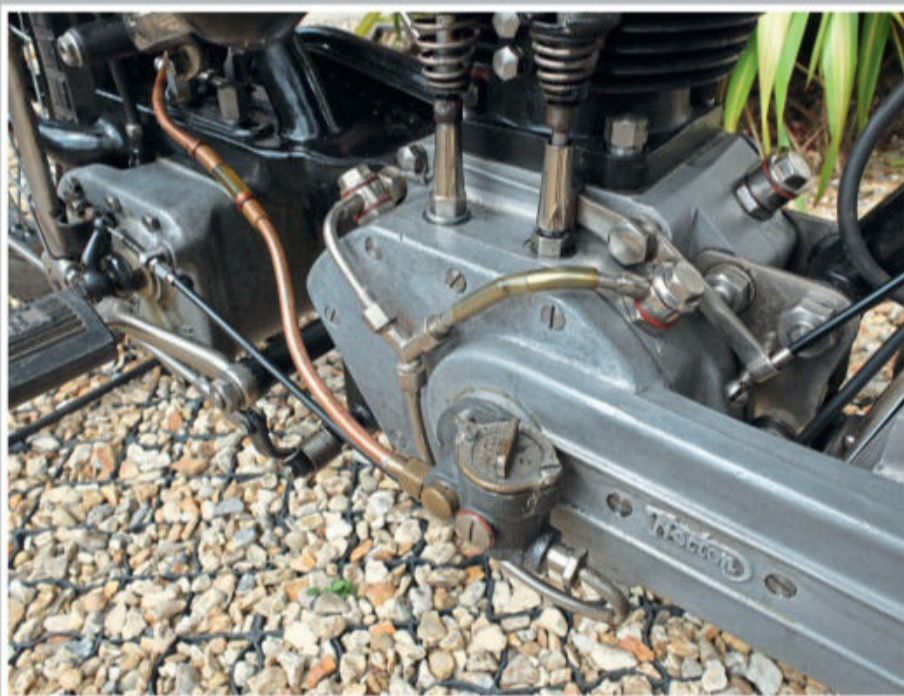
Where there's a classification you'll find a sub-division and the world of pre-1931 motorcycles is no exception. Very early machines, made up to 1915, are actually *veterans* and subject to their own specialist events. Veteran machines exist at the very origins of the motorcycle and may be thought of as motorised bicycles in many cases. Expect push-only starting, single-speed machines driven by linked leather belts. Undoubtedly fascinating, but perhaps a challenge too far for the novice owner and quite difficult to use in mixed road traffic.

Vintage bikes are considered as having been built between 1916 and the very end of 1930, a time of huge technical innovation and a period when motorcycle sales exploded.

While the machines of the early vintage period can directly trace their lineage back to the bicycle, by the latter part of the roaring Twenties things had moved on a fair bit. We'll explore the later vintage machines, bikes you'd be far more likely to see at a vintage event and capable of being ridden on modern roads, up to a point. They are also the most populous and, if not exactly cheap, are at least vaguely affordable. ➤



Ace Tester Miles set out upon his noble quest aboard a 500 AJS, an almost affordable and almost reliable machine. Of course he soon exchanged it for something(s) less affordable and reliable



It is important that the engine receives oil in the correct quantities. Older oil pumps live outside the engine and are often adjustable, as seen here. Observe with interest the clear sections of the feed pipes and wonder whether you could see them from the saddle



Some oil pumps are fitted with a sight glass, whereby a chap can observe the oil's flow rate. This is always a fascination

How do vintage motorcycles differ from later bikes?

Up to the mid-1920s the majority of bikes would have been flat-tankers; you're probably familiar with the term so often used to describe very old bikes. A flat-tanker is, literally, a motorcycle with a lozenge-shaped flat fuel tank, sitting snugly under the top frame rail. Such machines

epitomise the vintage bike and are the machines most associated with the term. Disadvantages include the fuel capacity, or rather, the lack of it. The tanks are often tiny, requiring the rider to carefully plan their journey or carry auxiliary fuel (spot the gorgeous little petrol cans strapped to the forks next time you see one). Often, the tank is required for oil carrying duties as well, further reducing range; look

out for twin filler caps. By the late 1920s fashions had changed and larger saddle tanks straddling the frame tubes became the norm, making flat-tank bikes look obsolete virtually overnight.

Other big differences between 'vintage' and 'classic' include the wheels and tyres.

Most bikes from the flat-tank era will use beaded edge



Speedos were not a legal requirement for many years, which makes them especially rare and valuable. They're pleasant to look at, too





Riding a flat tanker can be seriously exciting. Here we see a handsome Triumph, 'Lady May', which has probably shown a clean set of heels to those bewildered modernists in the background

tyres, often quoted in unusual sizes as they can refer to the overall size of the wheel and tyre, not just the rim. Beaded edge rims are smooth and shallow, but with quite an inward curl at the edges clinching the rubber-beaded edge of the tyre. Such tyres and rims are now only available to order from specialist companies, and the tyres especially may be out of stock for months or even years on end. Bear this in mind if buying a bike that 'just needs new rubber' and check whether suitable tyres are available.

About the time the industry switched over to saddle tanks, tyre technology also moved towards the more modern arrangement we enjoy today. So later bikes with 'wired-on' tyres can usually be fitted with modern rubber such as Avon Speedmaster tyres, 'modern' being a relative term here!

The majority of late vintage motorcycles will proudly display familiar, if tiny, drum-

type brakes on both wheels, having left the bicycle-type stirrup and rim brakes (occasionally with wooden brake blocks!) far behind. Beware: just because they look like the brakes you're familiar with doesn't mean they actually work!

Controls for brake and clutch may well be via those beautiful inverted levers so beloved of the vintage manufacturers. Although not as efficient as later blade levers, they are an essential part of the vintage experience and are to be enjoyed at every opportunity. Caressing them as you approach a corner 20mph too quickly can be a soothing experience – for a few seconds!

If your new vintage bike is a very late example, say a 1930 model, there may well be a separate oil tank and pump, circulating the vital liquid around the motor, just like your 1960s Triumph. There may even be some kind of filter fitted. Go back even a couple of years,

however, and the oiling system is likely to be total-loss (one-way). With this system, oil is only used once and is delivered to the engine via a mechanical pump (Pilgrim and Best & Lloyd being popular).

It is up to the rider to decide how much oil their motor needs, and requires the pilot to be sympathetic to the speed and terrain over which their bike is being ridden. Ridden flat out for long periods, or when climbing a steep hill, an auxiliary hand pump is sometimes required to prevent seizures. But too much oil risks fouling the spark plugs or smoking out the neighbourhood! This remains one of the more stressful parts of the vintage experience, as you wish neither to break down nor blow up as a consequence of over- or under-oiling. Nonetheless, it is a vital part of vintage motorcycle riding and a challenge to be embraced, not feared.

Engine choices are almost unlimited, ➤

with singles, twins and multis all being offered in a variety of styles and alignments. The motors could be two-stroke, or four, with sidevalves, overhead valves and even overhead cams. Generally speaking, a 'typical' vintage motorcycle is likely to be fitted with a sidevalve single cylinder engine of between 250 and 500cc. The equivalent sporting model might be ohv and the racing variant possibly ohc. Vintage twins are mainly sidevalves and were often thought of as being the grand tourer, possibly even hauling a sidecar, rather than outright sporting machines. Of course, there are lots of exceptions to this generalisation but your first vintage motorcycle will very possibly be some sort of four-stroke single.

As for equipment... you may get lights, possibly a speedometer, too! Both were considered luxury optional accessories back then, available at additional cost. Prior to about 1928, lighting was most likely acetylene gas, requiring the owner to mix water with carbide crystals and ignite filaments inside the lamps themselves. Many vintage groups organise night-time acetylene runs over pitch-black country roads; yet another new skill to learn and you'll find a new level of respect for previously maligned Joe Lucas setups on 'modern' 1950s bikes!

Electric lighting, courtesy of a 6V dynamo setup found its way onto the later vintage motorcycles and, again, a saddle-tank bike will quite probably have electric lamps, if so equipped. Electricity also spelled the end for the bulb horn, another link to the bicycle past forever lost.

Speedometers were expensive extras back then and today a vintage speedo will command a huge price premium. The superb Bonniksen, for example, changes hands for



well in excess of a thousand pounds today. If you're not lucky enough to find a bike so equipped, don't despair, most riders fit discreet bicycle-type speedos that are perfectly adequate.

Your late vintage motorcycle is likely to have a three-speed gearbox and it will be hand-change; foot selectors did not become widely available until the mid-1930s. In many respects this represents the greatest riding challenge, one that will keep you entertained for the rest of your riding life as you endlessly strive to achieve quick and crunch-free gear changes on your vintage bike. Clutches with cork-impregnated plates work well, although regular adjustment is expected of the owner.

What will I need to run my vintage bike?

A sense of humour! If you've come to the point of wanting a vintage machine, chances are you've already owned and fettled newer motorcycles. You'll be familiar with kick-starting, decompressors and manual advance on magnetos. Riding



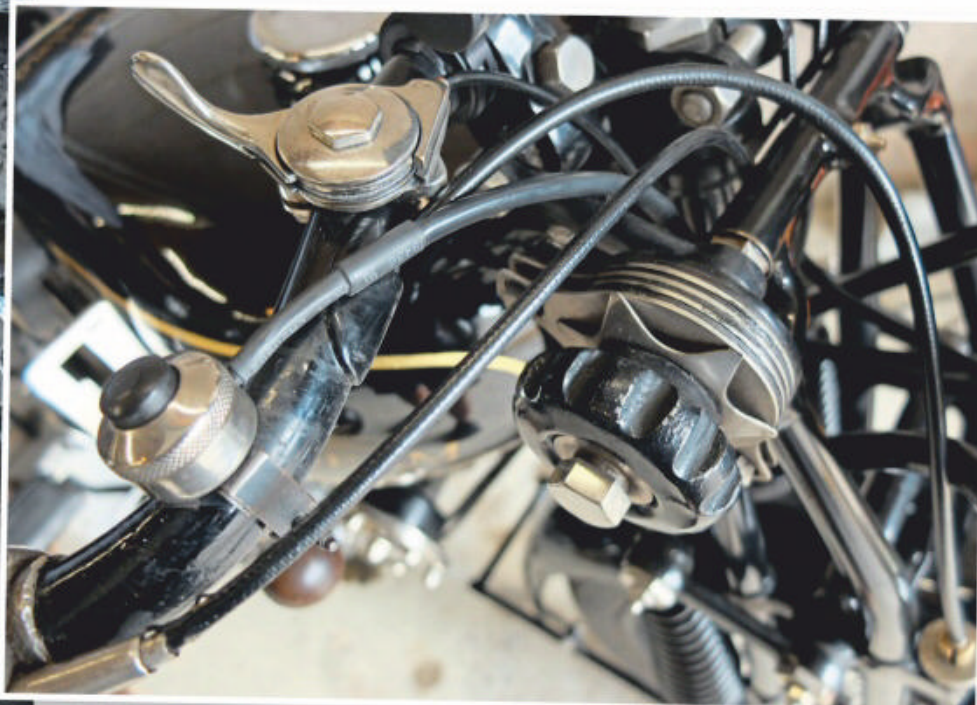
Acetylene 'lighting' is always entertaining. A chap drips water onto carbide crystals, O-level chemistry then produces acetylene gas, which a chap lights with a match to the jet, as seen in the pic with the opened lamp. Riding at night is a unique pleasure with acetylene lamps

a 90-plus year old bike demands all that knowledge, alongside an acceptance that things will just go awry from time to time. The lack of any meaningful suspension, modest brakes and – ahem – moderate performance can make them tiring to ride. A friend reckons one mile on a flat-tanker is equivalent to four on a 1960s bike. A good ride with like-minded friends is 40 miles and a long journey 80.

How your bike behaves and what it prefers is very much a personal learning curve and an understanding between it and you. Experimentation with tyre pressures, for example, can yield amazing results. One of ➤



Most maintenance work is within the competence of home mechanics. You can even re-cork your clutch plates if the need arises



Lots going on here. Observe the fork damping. The friction damper controls the vertical movement, not the steering

my vintage bikes rides impeccably with about 16psi in the tyre, yet another, similar bike steers like a shopping trolley with less than 26. The same applies to magneto advance and air slide levers; you just get to know where they are happiest. This symbiosis between rider and machine is really the secret of vintage appeal; it becomes *your* bike, one that you and only you can really get the best out of.

You'll also need 50W classic oil, lots of it. Vintage engines, often with total loss oiling and exposed valves, were never designed to be oil-tight or smoke-free. Even when new they oozed a bit and nine decades of use can hardly have helped the cause. You'll end up with oily boots and dirty hands: it won't only be the bike that's described as 'oily rag' when you get to the café.

Spark plugs are likely as not to be weird sizes, usually a chunky 18mm, although specialist companies can supply them as required with excellent availability.

These bikes were designed to be worked on at home and the owner was expected to perform tasks like de-coking as a matter of course. As such, special tools were seldom required and your basic toolkit will probably suffice for everyday maintenance. A good set of taps and dies, lathe and welding kit wouldn't go amiss, however!

I'm convinced. Which vintage bike should I buy?

Good. Let's go spend that money! As a rule of thumb, the earlier the bike, the more it will cost to buy. Things like engine and frame numbers that match factory records will also affect the price, but try to be realistic. A bike that's been around for nearly a century is entitled to have needed a replacement frame or new engine somewhere along the line, so don't automatically pass it up as choice is quite limited.

Twin and multi cylinder machines cost more money than singles (sometimes a great deal more) and an ohv bike is typically more expensive than the equivalent sv model. Don't forget the extras either; a speedometer, lighting kit or nice leather accessories can affect the price considerably.

Contrary to what you might have heard, turning up at a VMCC vintage and veteran event on your new vintage bike won't subject you to forensic analysis and criticism; no-one expects such old machines to be factory correct or immaculate. Many bikes will be somewhat – ahem – 'patinated' and really crusty machines are as much revered as fully restored examples; it's the using that counts, not the appearance. At events I've taken part in, the other riders are generous with both time and tools. Riders who no longer own the



As fuel capacity is often on the tiny side, many riders carry a spare supply



The height of aspiration for many vintagents: sidevalve V-twin, complete with a hand change and an excellent bulb horn

type of bike I'm riding, but wish to see them continue to be used, have even given me spare parts. I've tried to do the same.

Brand names matter, especially when it comes to price. Companies that were winning big, back in the day, command a price premium over other marques. A Norton single will invariably cost more than the equivalent bike from Royal Enfield or BSA, for example. Certain models have acquired legendary status over the years, and a Norton Model 18, cammy Velocette or AJS Big Port invariably carries a salty price tag. Their less overtly sporting cousins cost far less to purchase yet offer a similarly delightful riding experience. You pay your money...

Performance is relative and never more so than with these very old bikes. The majority of late vintage bikes I've tried will happily cruise at 35-40mph with top speeds of about 55. The fastest bikes, usually ohv 500s or twin

cylinder sidevalves, can comfortably exceed 75. And know this, 70mph-plus on a 95 year-old motorcycle with almost no suspension or brakes makes riding a Fireblade at 150 seem dull! But in a group with other, similarly equipped riders, a 40mph 'race' can be hugely entertaining, with a sense of camaraderie and fun I've never quite experienced elsewhere on two wheels.

I'm in! How much?

I would suggest that, as a minimum size for your first vintage bike, you should look at a 350. Generalising yet again, the least expensive is likely to be a 350 sv, then a 500, through to 350 and 500 ohvs, with twin and multi cylinder bikes the most expensive. Buy the best-running example you can justify, preferably from an enthusiast who regularly used it and knows the machine well. A lot of these bikes change hands by word of mouth and it wouldn't be unusual to



More modern machinery will employ chains to drive them along. If you've got it – flaunt it!

find a previous owner to advise you on the particular machine you're interested in.

Specialist vintage dealers, such as Verralls, Vintage & Veteran and Andy Tiernan have an in-depth knowledge of old bikes (and their owners!) and will do their best to source you a nice example if you ask them nicely. There isn't a great deal of choice, remember; we're talking of survivors from a century ago, so prices are firm and rising steadily. In fact, the VMCC are increasing the number of their specialist vintage runs to accommodate this increased interest.

To find anything in regular use and good working order for less than £7000 would be a real result. A budget of £10,000 is more realistic if you'd like a reasonable choice. A sidevalve single is the perfect machine to cut your teeth on, with Enfield and AJS being



Beautiful detail abounds on the more up-market machinery

especially popular. Later, saddle-tank bikes, offer relatively good value compared to flat-tankers and can be easier to ride, with better brakes and genuine performance. A Marston-built Sunbeam ohv 350 or 500 (Model 8 or 9) single enjoys a superb reputation and can be used as a daily rider if required, yet they cost less than half of the equivalent Norton. Expect to pay £10-14,000 for a nice ohv Sunbeam,



Where the combustible gases come from. Carbide in the tin, add water, light resulting gas, cross fingers...

less for a sidevalve and more if it's a flat-tanker. A flat-tank Norton with an ohv 500cc motor could set you back something like two or even three times that, by comparison.

A post-vintage bike, built in 1931 or later, might appear to be a far more attractive proposition, with prices generally lower than their older relations. But vintage they're not, so remain ineligible for these select events. Purchase with care.

Owners' clubs play a vital role in keeping these old bikes rolling, collating knowledge and commissioning the manufacture of specific spare parts. I recently rebuilt the clutch on my 90 year-old Sunbeam using new spares available off the shelf from the owners' club; it took longer to get bits for my 2016 Harley.

At the other end of the scale, obscure European-made bikes are regularly offered at very attractive prices, yet spare parts can be almost impossible to procure; buyer beware. It may well be worth joining the owners' club of the machine you fancy and looking in their small ads, which are usually only accessible to members.

Joining an owners' club, or indeed multi-brand organisations like the VMCC or Sunbeam MCC (it's for all bike built before 1940 and not just for Sunbeams, despite the name) also gains you access to their respective specialist runs and events. If riding a vintage motorcycle is great, the effect is hugely amplified when out with other, similarly mounted souls. Vintage runs are invariably planned to run over quieter roads, avoiding heavy traffic and sympathetic to the limitations imposed by riding these historic bikes. There may even be prizes – sometimes just for making it round the course!

Ultimately, your choice is dependent on a number of factors. Budget, of course: how



If British marques are too expensive, consideration can be given to overseas machinery – like this Magnat-Debon BST 350 from 1929



The smile says it all. Go Vintage!

much do you have to spend? Availability: what's actually out there to buy and are there spares to help keep it on the road? Style of machine: go with a 1929/30 bike and it will likely come with modern tyres, acceptable brakes, electric lighting, saddle tank and a recirculating oil system. All of this familiarity will help smooth the transition into the world of vintage biking.

Go back just a couple of years into the flat-tank era and embark on the steep learning curve of flat tankers, with their total-loss oiling, acetylene lights and beaded edge

tyres. Both styles of machine are vintage, of course, but the later bikes are very much the grandfathers of modern motorcycles, whereas the flat-tankers really are the last link with pioneer and veteran motorcycles.

Do as I say?

Me? Well, my first vintage was a sidevalve 500 AJS flat-tanker, which I rode at Banbury (a leading strictly pre-1931 event attracting some 500 riders each year) last year and reported on in *RealClassic*. I bought it a little reluctantly, it must be said, as I was precluded

from using my 1935 Scott on a local vintage run as it was 'too modern' and that stung a bit. It seemed to me at the time that there was precious little difference between the 'ineligible' Scott and a true vintage bike; the cut-off period appearing to be little more than a date stuck in a calendar with a pin.

I couldn't have been more wrong! Motorcycles built in the mid-1930s are almost as easy to ride as a post-war machine, requiring far less input from the rider. Which is why they're ineligible for vintage events...

The AJS was the ideal first vintage bike, forgiving of this novice and great fun as well as proving to be incredibly reliable. It has since been replaced (hastily and somewhat foolishly) with a similar-looking yet scarily quick 350 ohv AJS Big Port, essentially a TT racer for the road. If I'm being completely honest, the Big Port, although faster, is more tiring to ride, with close ratio gearbox and a racing carburettor adding little to the enjoyment factor on public roads.

But so hard did the bug bite that I've ended up selling most of my classics from the 1950s, 60s and 70s in order to fund my vintage habit. The AJS now shares shed space with a Zenith JAP V-twin, an ohv Sunbeam, Douglas twin and Norton single. I choose the bike to ride based on the style of event and how much of a challenge I fancy on the day.

Do I ever miss the newer, post-war bikes I sold? Never, not even for a second. True pleasure is to be found in exposed valves and girder forks, and you'll never be short of conversation whenever you stop. You'll know when you're ready for a proper vintage bike, and when you hear that tiny voice in your head... listen!

Rc



WELCOME TO THE JUMBLE

In these days of instant online shopping, is there any need to actually go to an actual place to buy (or sell) old bike bits? Odgie investigates...



Photos by Odgie Himself

Bike builders and restorers have never had it so good. There's a rash opening statement for you. We can all hark back to the days when up and running bikes were fifty quid each (or often much less), and parts were correspondingly cheap. Back wheel for a Triumph? Eight quid. Norton petrol tank? A fiver.

Sure enough, we weren't paying the stratospheric prices witnessed today, and you could still put a bike together relatively cheaply. Back then for many of us originality wasn't that big a deal. We were just cobbling things together to keep old bikes on the road, and half the time we were taking factory tinware off bikes and fitting all manner of aluminium or fibreglass 'go faster' goodies.

If you or your mates didn't have the bits you needed (vaguely from the same model, although a variety of washers often made things fit if you stacked enough of them

together), you trundled off to the nearest breakers – anyone else go all misty-eyed at the thought of Sid's Place*? (*insert local breaker of choice here) – and picked up what you wanted for not a lot of money.

Mmm, I've inadvertently answered my own question. Hell, they were the best times to be building bikes.

Moving swiftly on, to a time when originality became if not paramount then at least Pretty Darned Important. A time when people wanted to restore bikes to showroom or even 'better than factory' condition. But where to find that elusive bracket or bit of tin or original mudguard, after kids like me had thrown them all in the cut to build choppers and café racers years ago? Wanted requests in the small ads pages of the motorcycling press? A good place to try, but of course by then we also had the autojumble. The (sometimes fruitless) quest, searching for perhaps years, jumble after jumble, stall after

stall, box after box, always following the fixed notion that one day, one day, you'd turn up The Very Thing. Which did happen of course. I once saw a chap at Garstang absolutely elated that he'd found a pair of genuine original handlebars with the welded-on lever bosses for his James (I think) on a stall. He'd only been looking for 12 years...

And then... And then...

And then along came the internet. Looking for rare or even not so rare parts became as simple as a couple of words of typing and a click of a button. eBay (effectively, although other sites are available) changed bike building virtually overnight, and in the manner of a very double-edged sword. On the one hand, oh look, there's the very thing I've been looking for. On the other hand, it only needs one more person to be saying those exact same





To get the best price, careful labelling is crucial. That Norton mudguard, for example, is priceless...



'In an English country garden...'

words and the price shoots from a fiver to fifty quid or even higher.

I'm not a great fan of eBay's business ethics, but as a necessary evil it's opened up a whole new way of sourcing parts and spares. Only this week I needed some 12mm Dowty washers. But where from? I could have driven all the way into town and called at all the various engineer's merchants – an hour or two and a few quid's worth of diesel – and possibly still not come up trumps. Or I could look on eBay. Within a minute £1.70 had bought me five including postage, and they arrived through the landlady's letterbox the next day. And I'm well aware of the 'use-it-or-lose-it' ►



'Not For Sale' says the sign. A thousand hearts were broken by reading this

of local suppliers, and try as much as possible to buy locally, but sometimes it just doesn't make sense.

But... But... Where's the companionship, the human contact, the excitement, even? eBay is a transaction, not an interaction, and what profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul?

I like autojumbles. Show me any biker worth his salt and I'll show you someone who likes autojumbles. In our local area for many years we were very blessed to have Garstang. Garstang was a Proper Autojumble. I know, the likes of Stafford, etc, are all very well, but the high stall prices mean it's very much professionals only. A Proper Autojumble is when people empty out their sheds, stick the resulting junk*/rare-and-exotic-parts (*delete as applicable) in the boot of the car and then get up at five in the morning to set it up in a windswept field somewhere so other idiots can get up at 6am and trundle round looking at it.

If you've never had a stall at an autojumble, it's a revelation. No sooner do you open the back doors of your van than the vultures are around. Not circling, mind, but swooping straight in for the kill. Experienced jumblers set their own stall up very early on, cover everything with a sheet till later, then set off on the hunt. What everyone wants to find at a jumble is the chap who is still working in 1960s prices. So as you're unloading, you're getting bombarded with 'How much is this, mate?' You can crumble under the assault or be made of sterner stuff and inform everyone



It is impossible to overstate the social side of jumbling



Where else can a chap satisfy his craving for a fine collection of brake pedals?



The art of the haggle on display



'Low mileage, one careful owner, needs Minor attention...'



A great game is to argue over what the parts are. I'll start with the C15 cylinder head. Next?



A feature of jumbles great and small is the optimistic project bike...

firmly you'll be pricing stuff once it's laid out, since rarely are you getting offered the best price first thing in the morning. And even when your stall is laid out, your pricing still needs to be spot-on. I have genuinely watched the cunning practitioners haggle for parts off one stall, only to see them not long afterwards sat on their own stall at a well marked-up price.

Ah, the gentle art of the haggle... And perhaps here we have the essence of autojumbling. Here is the interaction, the cut and thrust, the desire to sell for the highest

versus the desire to buy for the lowest, the gladiatorial contest. Here is mano a mano in its purest form. Hagglng at its finest is an art form, body language, poker faces, psychology, these are all the subtle tools of the haggle. Look too interested to buy and the price is going up even before you ask. Look too keen to sell and the price is going down before your very eyes.

Everyone has their own techniques, and they vary depending on the situation. There's a tank you fancy; do you pick it up and ask the price, do you leave it there and ➤



ask the price, do you pick it up, show vague disinterest, then put it down again and look further along, then wander back and ask the price as a nonchalant afterthought?

Stallholders read punters to gauge the asking price, punters read stallholders to decide which way to play it. Not that the asking price is likely to be the selling price. That's merely the first move of the chess game, or perhaps more accurately the first lunge of the fencing match. Then follows parry or riposte, the foils click-clacking together as the contest takes shape. Often it can be a brief affair: offer, counter offer, middle ground acceptance.

But many times it's much more complex. Flaws are pointed out, eBay prices quoted, how much the last one cost/was sold for, battle lines drawn and established, 'It's only as a spare' waging war against 'Try and find another one'. Different styles, different approaches, different comebacks, sometimes devolving into matters much more of principle than of price. I've watched haggles for nearly ten minutes over a measly pound. Even as a spectator sport, autojumbles are just fun.

Anyway, we lost Garstang, I'm not sure why it closed down, but suffice to say it did. It was a local tradition, as much a social event as anything else. You tried to get to every one because as everyone knows, if you don't go you don't know what you might have missed. You bumped into mates, fellow riders from the pre-65 trials clubs, other VMCC members, some people you got to know through Garstang and only ever saw there, yet still think of as friends. We all bemoaned its passing.

So my ears pricked up when I heard there was a new autojumble starting up locally. The very first one was on a day when I should have been flat-track racing, but as it happened I was still recovering from various broken bony bits in my shoulder from the last crash. I needed a crafty device so that at the start of the weekend, when I was watching all my mates on Facebook loading bikes and getting ready, I didn't flex my newly sling-free shoulder, think the bones were probably sorta healed enough, and go throw the race bike in the van regardless. So I headed myself off at the pass and booked a place to have a

stall instead. Sensible. Yes, sadly. Maybe I'm finally growing up after all. Oh dear...

I didn't have a lot of swag around me to take, but it would be good to support a new local venture, and it would keep me from going racing with an arm that was pretty stiff at best and really didn't want to move too much at all first thing in the morning. I threw some junk in the van on the Saturday, set the alarm for 5.45am on the Sunday, and hey, there we were.

For a first event, on a drizzly wet day, it was quite a decent turn out. Hopefully it'll go from strength to strength, and if you're in the Lancashire area, the Leisure Lakes near Southport is the place to be on the second Sunday in every month. Now I could have spiced up these pages with generic autojumble photos of rare bikes and huge arrays of parts. But this is reality, the accurate representation of one of the lifebloods of our hobby, the parochial autojumble. Not row upon row of repatriated US returnee bikes, or huge stands stuffed with shiny new repro pattern parts, this is just me and a few other blokes in a muddy field with some bits of



Mighty Montesa seeks new home...



Simply red

swag to sell.

How did I do? I took a grand total of £70. That included two copies of my book (now back in print again) which boosted the gross figure, otherwise it was just a pair of rusty handlebars, an indeterminate rear mudguard and a NOS air filter element. Knock off the unit price of the book printing (it isn't cheap), the cost of the stall, a gallon of diesel in the van, and I ended up with £19 in me hand. For three hours loading on the Saturday, four hours at the jumble, a 20 minute drive each way and an hour unloading on the Monday. And, er, not counting what I paid for the parts in the first place...

Is that the point? No, of course not. I saw old friends, I met interesting strangers, I showed off the A65 race bike, I saw a bunch of stuff, I chatted to lots of people, I bantered, I haggled, I talked a lot of nonsense and I had Fun. I had a great day and I still came home with more money in my pocket than I set out with. eBay can never compete with that. **Rc**



Rare spares. Vital spares. Mainly unidentified, but someone somewhere must need them. Please?

OUTWARD BOUND

Going places? Grab your jacket, hat, gloves and get that old bike a-rolling!

Check out the RealClassic Facebook page for up to date details of forthcoming old bike events, and to see if the RC Crew are on manoeuvres. Visit www.facebook.com/realclassicmagazine and 'like' the page. In the 'like' options, click to 'see first' in your news feed. Then you'll always know what's happening!

DECEMBER 2ND

► Brian Launder of the White Helmets display team is **GUEST SPEAKER** with the Northumbrian VMCC, at Birtley Golf Club, Chester le Street, DH3 2LR from 8pm. He'll be recalling what it's like to ride backwards, leap through flames and carry half a dozen passengers on one Triumph! Admission £1. 07968 646357 / northumbrianvmcc.co.uk

DECEMBER 7TH

► The **SOUTHERN CLASSIC OFF-ROAD SHOW** and awesome autojumble returns to Kempton Park racecourse, TW16 5AQ. Undercover halls with club displays, private entries and trade stands, tilted towards competition and custom classics. Best In Show and Best Flat-Tracker prizes up for grabs (maybe we should enter Frank's A65T?) Plus the usual indoor and outdoor jumble stalls. Gates open 7.45am for earlybirds (£10), or £7 from 9.30am. Free parking (but it can get very busy). kemptonparkautojumble.co.uk

DECEMBER 8TH

► There's a Normous Newark **AUTOJUMBLE** at Newark Showground, Winthorpe, NG24 2NY. Mixed bike, car and all things auto. Free parking. Classic vehicle display. Opens 10am (or premium pass from 8am). Display your classic for a £2 discount on the entry fee of £7. 01507 529593 / newarkautojumble.co.uk

► The Cambridge bikers **CHRISTMAS TOY RUN** leaves 10am from La Pergola at the Wheatsheaf, Harlton, CB23 1HA. Arrive from 8.30 for breakfast. Rides to Addenbrookes hospital. Around 500 bikes of all ages expected.

DECEMBER 12TH

► Land speed record driver David Tremayne gives a **CLASSIC TALK** at Brooklands Museum about his land speed attempt and the wider world of motorsports. Food from 6pm, talk start 7.30. £7 admission. 07880 670359 / brooklandsmuseum.com

DECEMBER 15TH

► The Haynes **BIKERS' BREAKFAST RIDE-IN** meets from 9.30am at Café 750, next to the Motor Museum itself at Sparkford, Yeovil, BA22 7LH. All marques and ages of machine welcome. himm.co.uk

► There's an **OFF-ROAD TRIAL** hosted by the Mancs and High Peak section of the VMCC. Starts Mow Cop near Congleton at 10.30. Air-cooled, dual-shock, drum-brake bikes only. Entry £12. 01782 776381

DECEMBER 21ST

► The **GREAT NORTH JUMBLE** starts 7am at the North Yorkshire Events Centre at Scorton, DL10 6EJ. Admission £3, huge jumble site with indoor and outdoor stalls. Pitches from £12. On-site refreshments. 07909 904705.

► Once again let's celebrate the shortest day with a **WINTER SOLSTICE RIDE!** Take any motorcycle to anywhere you like (but there may be prizes for standing stones and similar ancient artefacts); post a photo on the RealClassic Facebook group or email it to RCHQ@RealClassic.net and we'll share the best of them

DECEMBER 29TH

► RC readers on appropriate motorcycles are welcome to join the South Lincs and Peterborough section of the VMCC on their **CHILLY WILLIE RUN**. Meets Stibbington Diner at 10.30am. vmcc-slandp.co.uk / 01733 770241

► There's a SPORTING TRIAL

hosted by the Taverners at Earl Shilton trials ground from 10.30. Pre-65 bikes only. Entry £12. 07973 142440 / thetaverners.co.uk

JANUARY 1ST

► **HAPPY NEW YEAR!** May all your skies be dry, all your roads wide open, and all your oil leaks insignificant!

► Vintage and classic cars and bikes will assemble from 9.30am until 2pm for **VINTAGE STONY** in the market square at Stony Stratford, MK11 1BE. Awards and stalls, free admission, donations to charity. vintagestony.co.uk

JANUARY 3RD AND 4TH

► The Motor Cycling Club's annual **EXETER TRIAL** covers around 150 miles in the most testing conditions. Spectators and marshals very welcome to attend at the various off-road sections along the route. Many classes for historic and more recent two- and three-wheelers plus trials cars. Starts at Cirencester, Popham airfield, Haynes Motor Museum and Okehampton and all routes finish at the Toorak Hotel at Torquay. See themotorcyclingclub.org.uk

JANUARY 11TH & 12TH

► The Carole Nash **WINTER CLASSIC** opens 9am at Newark Country Showground, NG24 2NY. Heated indoor halls with stacks of classic bikes, special scooter displays, motogymkhana and more, plus star guest GP and WSB rider Frankie Chili. Advance tickets £10, free parking. 01507 529529 / classicbikeshows.com

JANUARY 12TH

► There's an indoor **BIKE SHOW** hosted by the NW

section of the VMCC at the Junction Pub, Rainford, WA11 7JU. Free admission to exhibitors and club members, £2 otherwise. 07582 966522

DIARY DATES!

► **The RC Roadshow is all booked in for the BRISTOL SHOW at Shepton Mallet on February 1st and 2nd. We're already shivering with excitement (or possibly it's a bit nippy at RCHQ Bude right now). Advance tickets from bristolclassicbikeshow.com. See you there!**

► The utterly excellent **GIANT'S RUN** returns at 10.30am on Sunday 7 June. Entries open now. Held in Dorset, it's exclusively for bikes with girder forks of any age, there's no date cut-off. 80 entries last year and over a hundred expected this time. Choice of two routes (shorter and flatter 35 miles, or a full 65 miles) on roads carefully chosen to be suitable for the machines; a slap-up lunch; an optional evening excursion on the Sat night for folks who are staying overnight, with scope for trailers, camper vans etc at the start/finish venue. Run costs just £6, £13.50 with lunch. Prebook absolutely essential. 07774 921600 / dorsetvmcc.co.uk



SEND YOUR EVENT INFO

to RCHQ@RealClassic.net for inclusion in the magazine and online listings

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BMW R60/6, 1975. 5 owners. Matching numbers bike in fantastic condition and completely original, including the OE BMW Panniers. Runs and rides great and is mechanically sound. 63000 miles. Great example of a classic BMW. Located J3 of M6. £4375ono. Adam, 07801 862910



HONDA VFR750 FT, 1996, 46k miles. Silver. Maxton upgraded forks, Givi panniers, Baglux tank bag, stainless exhaust, new chain and sprockets, new battery. Many stainless parts. Chain oiler, powder coated wheels, manual and spares. £1500. Jim, Bury 07974 071187, Lancs



HONDA 250XL S twin shock trail bike, 1982. Fully restored with 21in alloy front wheel and new 18in chrome rear. Recent engine top end and new camchain fitted. XLR sprung rear chain tensioner. Lights not fitted at present but available. £1975. 01803 882074, S Devon



BSA B31 350, 1957. Ariel hubs. Nice tidy looking bike. Alloy wheel rims, solid state voltage controller. New parts include tyres, kickstart, air filter. Easy starter, runs and rides well. V5C. £4600 may take p/x. 01328 700711, Norfolk



ROYAL ENFIELD, 1925 9.6hp V twin model 190. Part restored, 90% complete. Original reg number with V5C. £12,995ono. Bristol 07905 998885



TRIUMPH TIGER 100, 1953. Matching numbers. Restored approximately 10 years ago by local Triumph enthusiast. No expense spared in restoration. Won Best British bike at Local Classic Motorcycle show in 2018. £6950ono. 07412 829545, Northumberland



BSA C15. Good condition. Engine and frame serial numbers match log book. Selling due to bereavement. £2500ono. 07727 256978, WR14 1SA



TRIUMPH SUPER CUB, 1966. New Amal carb. battery and rebuilt clutch. Pazon ignition. £3250 or offers. Malcolm, 01476 577096



YAMAHA DT175 ENDURO, 1978. It is freshly refurbished, matching numbers, black powder coated frame and ancillaries, non-standard paint. An excellent and attractive little two-stroke. Some spares. £1700. Lewis, 079 222 80837, North East



TRIUMPH TIGER 955i, 2001. 31,000 miles, well maintained, full service history, Scottoiler. £1750. 01223 246868, Cambridge



MZ ETZ 125, 1992. 25771 miles, MoT March 2020. £800ono. Peter, 07443 221276, Leeds



ROYAL ENFIELD 1925 Model 190 9.96hp V twin. 90% complete, part restored. Original non-transferable reg number with V5C. Complete with restored Enfield sidecar chassis and unrestored sidecar body. £12,995ono. Bristol 07905 998885



53 Matchless G80 500, ride/
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73 Triumph X75 Hurricane, V5c....
.....£23,995



13 Ariel 500 Sports, Pioneer cert.
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74 Benelli Tornado 650S2,
superb.....£5,995



60 R/E Constellation 700, great
bike.....£5,995



78 BMW R45 nice usable
Boxer.....£2,250



91 H/D 1200 Sportster Special,
bargain.....£2,795



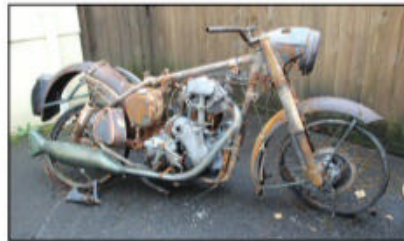
94 Triumph Trophy 900, another
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.....£1,395



65 Ariel Arrow/Avon fairing 250,
stunning.....£4,250



59 Velo Venom 500 fire damage,
V5c, spares.....£offers



67 R/E Interceptor Mk1A 750,
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59 Ariel Square 4 Mk2, fabulous four..£12,500
74 Benelli Tornado 650 S2£12,995
57 BSA CB32 350 Gold Star, beauty£16,500
70 BSA Rocket 3, 3k, original£12,995
72 BSA A65 Thunderbolt, lovely£5,750
71 BSA A65 Lightning, nr mint£6,595
c70's Cossack Jupiter 350 twin project£595
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91 CZ Mod 513 250cc Scrambler, awesome£1,995
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56 F/B 197 in Trials trim, runs well, V5c£1,295
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80 Honda CB400N S/Dream, ride/restore£1,295
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80 Honda CM200, good commuter£995
61 James Captain 197, ride/restore£995
73 Kawasaki F7 175, like new, V5c£3,495
11 Kawasaki W800, 8k, mint, like new£3,750
70 Kawasaki 175 Bushwacker, rare, V5c£3,495
66 Lambretta J125, like new£1,995
85 Laverda SFC1000, fabulous/rare£9,995

59 Matchless G3 350, lovely single ...£3,495
53 Matchless G80 500, ride/restore£tba
71 Mobylette Commuter DeLuxe, V5c£695
91 MZ ETZ310 in Café trim, goes v well ..£995
55 Norton Mod 30 International, mint£19,995
66 Raleigh RM6 Runabout, v original£1,295
70 R/E 350 Bullet, superb£2,795
76 R/E 350 Bullet in white, superb£2,750
76 Suzuki TS125 in Scrambler trim, V5£1,295
72 Suzuki T500 Cobra in black, runs well ..£3,495
74 Suzuki T500 Cobra in red, runs well£4,495
72 Triumph T100C, beautiful£7,500
74 Triumph TR5T Adventurer£7,750
73 Triumph TR5T Advenurer, fire damage ..£4,995
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76 Triumph TR7 750 Special£5,995
00 Triumph Legend TT 900, 10k£4,250
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READER ADS

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BSA A7 650cc, 1960. Original tinware restored and refinished. S/steel rims and spokes. Pre-unit Triumph 6T crankcases, rest of engine is 1967 TR6 with manual Wader mag. Many extras (see text ads). Historical registration, T&T. £6350. 01373 451130



MOTO GUZZI ELDORADO, 1973. Matching numbers. Balanced 950cc. Extensive list of work done. Age and circumstances mean bike now too heavy. May p/ex for Guzzi V50/3 or V65. Located near Diss. £6750. 01379 674500 or darogee149@icloud.com



PANTHER M120, 1961. 650cc combination. Excellent Watsonian single seater sidecar with a tonneau cover and a large boot area. Also has a working sidecar brake and a spare wheel all on a Panther sidecar chassis. In unrestored condition. V5C. Can deliver. 07798 866071, Middx.



NORTON JUBILEE, 1967. One of the last. Matching numbers. Paintwork immaculate, mechanically first class. Wheel rim chrome a little thin. £1800. Mick, 0116 221 3794, Leics



JAWA / CZ 175cc Trail, 1976 Barn find. Speedo showing 8000 miles. No documents. Been used on a farm. Ideal project. £750. 01723 372219, North Yorkshire



ROYAL ENFIELD 350 BULLET. Redditch built, 1954. Original registration number, green log book, V5C. Alloy rims, twin front brakes. Very original. VGC. £3500. 01723 372219, North Yorkshire



BMW R65, 1981. Lovingly restored to an excellent condition. 11 months MoT. Updated electronic ignition system. Lovely ride. £3500. 01622 741904, Kent



KAWASAKI GT750p5, 1991. 56k miles. MoT November 2020. Good condition, paintwork fair. Hagon shocks, Motad exhaust. New fork seals. K&N type air filters (originals supplied), new back mudguard. £850ono. 0121 4780172 or 07762 147386, West Mids



HONDA CX500 EC, 1982. 45k miles. Excellent condition. Fairing and sidecar resprayed, new hood and tonneau. Towball and electrics. 8 months MoT, SORN. £2750. 01983 530856, Isle of Wight

BIKES

VELOCETTE SEYMOUR METTISSE. Ex Tom Kirby frame (number 104) with known history. Mk2 Venom Clubman engine, BTH comp mag, Seymour head and fluted wheels, central oil tank. Runs well and in vgc, only selling to fund purchase of pioneer bike. 01865 874534 or 07960 447592. No texts please

BSA A7 650cc, 1960. Original tinware restored and refinished. S/steel rims and spokes. Pre-unit Triumph 6T crankcases, rest of engine is 1967 TR6 with manual Wader mag. Original A7 gearbox with Triumph 4-spring clutch. Also the original A7 engine complete with refurbished magneto and generator, carb and e/plates built and running included in sale. Historical registration, T&T. £6350. 01373 451130 (see photo ads for pic)

WANTED

19-inch 40-hole WM2 rim to fit BSA 8-inch single sided brake hub. Need not be pristine, will be painted. Or complete front wheel with good chrome / stainless rim, with or without brake plate. Alan Hughes, 01633 894042 or frodshamflyer@hotmail.com S. Wales

ARIEL LEADER AND ARROW PARTS. Frames, tinware, engines, indicators complete. Speedometers. Rare parts inc original plastic indicator side pods for non-pannier models. Ken, 01530 270747, Derbys

BITS

ROYAL ENFIELD BULLET right hand side panel, £20. Crusader left hand side panel, £15. Both metal. Cut down Bullet casquette, £10. Bullet rear subframe, £10. All Redditch. Peter, Leeds. 07443 221276

HONDA 125 1986 STATOR PLATE (two coil). Headlamp shell for same bike. Coventry, 02476 617472

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1958 Ariel VH 500cc late model.....	£5350
1955 Ariel VB 600cc late tele rigid.....	£5500
1956 Ariel Huntmaster 650cc handsome machine.....	£5500
1965 BSA Bantam D7 175cc popular lightweight.....	£1750
1936 BSA B2 250cc OHV lovely pre-war model.....	£6000
1954 BSA C10L 250cc pretty machine.....	£3250
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1937 BSA G14 v-twin 1000cc coming in soon.....	£18,750
1939 Cotton 122cc very rare.....	£4250
1949 Douglas T35 350cc recently refurbished lots of bills.....	£5250
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1937 Francis Barnett Cruiser 250cc nice bike.....	£4500
1953 Matchless G3LS 350cc nice and presentable.....	£3500
1923 Matchless J2 1000cc v-twin outfit lovely oily rag.....	£22,000
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1951 Nimbus model C 750cc 4 cylinder Danish machine.....	£10,000
1955 Norton ES2 490cc nice matching number.....	£6650
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1927 Norton 16H fine looking example.....	£22,000
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IDENTICAL TWINS?

The history of the old British bike industry is littered with neverwossers and might-have-been machines. Richard Negus uncovers a unique Norton

Photos by Richard Negus

PART ONE:
UNCOVERING
AN ENGINE

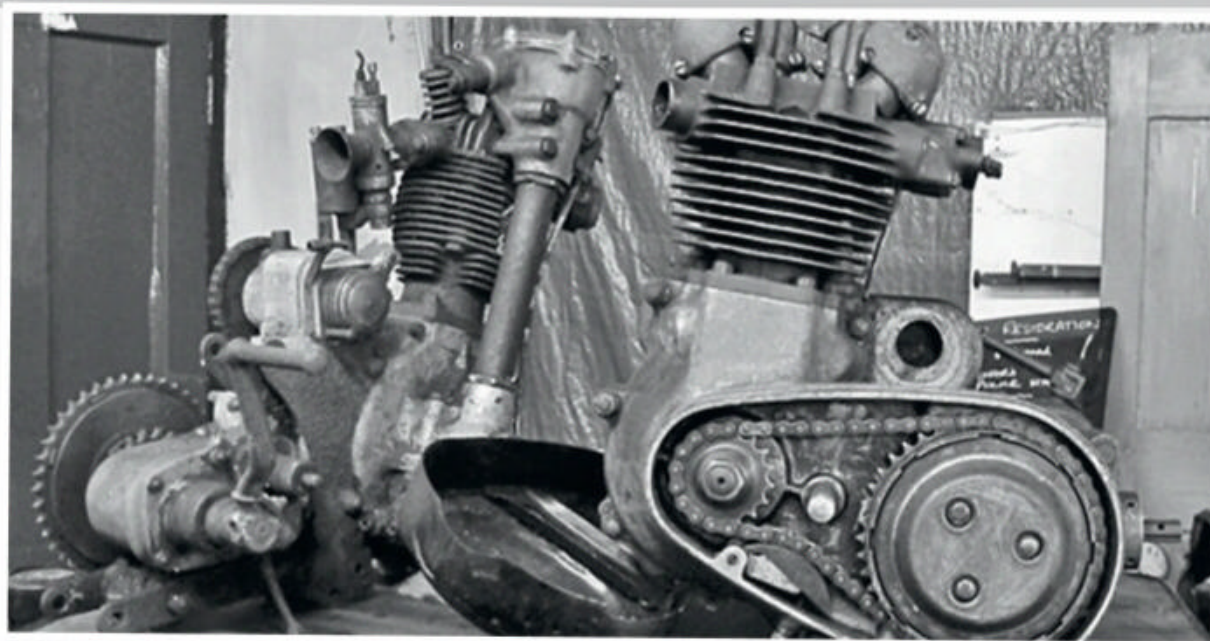




The engine on its own. Very compact indeed



As with the early BSA A7, and because the gearbox is bolted rigidly to the engine, the Norton twin uses a slipper tensioner to adjust the primary chain



What Richard describes as 'the bait'. A small pic of a well-used Norton twin engine which predates the Model 7



This is not even faintly like Norton's later Hopwood-designed twin engine. Like the first of the BSA twins, the gearbox bolts up to the back of the crankcase

The bait had been dangled several months earlier by Anthony who, very kindly, sent me a couple of photos of a very dirty engine and gearbox sitting on a workbench in someone's garage. This, he assured me, was a prototype Norton twin from the 1940s designed by their then Chief Engineer Jack Moore. I, perversely, was more interested in another engine in the background which appeared to be OHC with a face cam and angled rockers; Chater Lea perhaps, but certainly more interesting than an ordinary 'Never-Wozzer' parallel twin that didn't look at all like a Norton.

A few months passed with no further mention until, out of the blue, Anthony informed that the mystery twin had changed hands, the new owner Phil wanted it rebuilding, and was I interested?

Well, it would have been rude to refuse and a few weeks later, White Van Man delivered the engine and another set of crankcases with a crank and one rod installed. Further discussion with Phil provided more about the provenance of the engine although there is very little, if any, reliable documented information.

Designed and manufactured at the Bracebridge Street works, it is said that six prototype engines were built during 1944/45 so that Norton could have a twin cylinder 500 to compete with Triumph, who had introduced their first OHV parallel twin in 1938. The arrival of Bert Hopwood as Norton's Chief Engineer in 1947 signalled the end of the project. Hopwood thought Moore's engine had too much Triumph influence and was certain to cause legal problems over design copyright if it was ever put on sale to the public. Hopwood produced the Model 7 500cc engine design which, with minor changes, has been in continuous production ►



The clutch is conventional enough

since then and can be seen even now in the layout of the current 961 Commando.

Two prototype engines are believed to have survived, the one now on my bench and another in a private collection. Phil's engine is said to have been sold, or even given, by Norton to Trusty Tractors, then using the Norton 16H engine to power their small garden tractors, with a view to it being used in a similar application. From there it passed to a farmer and laid gathering dust in a barn for fifty years. The separate set of crankcases and crank came via a dealer in Austria with no information or explanation of how they got there or what happened to the rest of that engine.

Phil also provided a photo of a framed original blueprint Norton drawing dated May 1947 showing a complete motorcycle with the engine installed in an ES2-type chassis. There is also, in 'Uncle Jim' Reynolds' book 'Pictorial History of Norton Motorcycles', an alleged photograph of the complete bike. Some features of the engine illustration and technical description are so fanciful as to confirm the 'photograph' is in fact an artist's impression based on the blueprint.

Every project needs a Grand Plan. In this case, Phil wanted to create that 1947 motorcycle illustrated by the blueprint using a 1947 ES2 rolling chassis plus its upright



From the front, the engine resembles an early Triumph more than a Norton

gearbox, fit all the mechanical bits from the complete engine into the 'Austrian' crankcases and install that engine into the chassis and, 'Hey Presto!', another vintage replica of something that, to the best of our knowledge, may not have actually existed. The Grand Plan is something best said quickly by an optimist; as always, the Devil is in the detail.

The first stage was to dismantle and



Just to add to the mystery, final drive from the gearbox is by a shaft

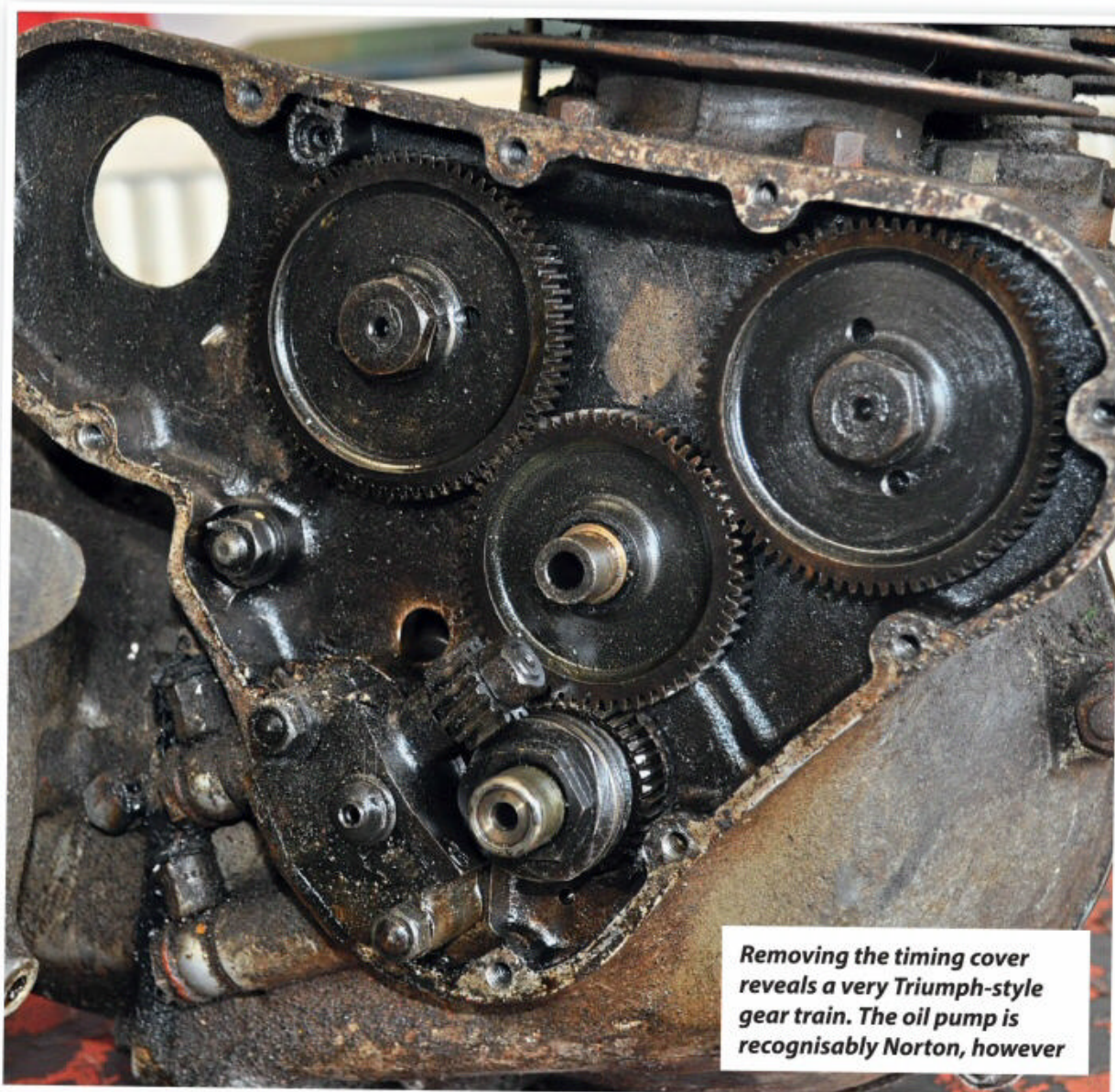


As was the way at the time, the rockers got their own separate feed via a collection of small-bore pipes

record the complete engine, step by step. Removing the timing cover revealed a set of camshaft drive gears, with camshafts front and rear (just like a Triumph). There was also an oil pump of very obvious Norton design. The whole internal surfaces were covered in black gunge suggesting that this engine had covered several thousand miles.

Turning to the other side, removing the steel primary cover revealed a Norton clutch, a 1/2" x 5/16" primary chain, and a pivoting steel-faced slipper to adjust the chain's tension. Wear marks on that slipper suggested the engine had, at some time, been fitted with a duplex primary chain.

After removing the clutch and engine sprocket, attention turned to removing the gearbox from the engine. The former is fixed to the crankcase by four short studs and nuts which, when removed, allowed the gearbox to be drawn away from the engine. This then revealed a large aperture in the crankcase, through which could be seen the crankshaft and connecting rods. Surprisingly, the rods were steel with a substantial rib around the big end eye. More surprising was a hint that it had a roller big end bearing. Just like the Spanish Inquisition, I wasn't expecting that! For those of more tender years, that's a Monty Python joke and for those who don't know ➤



Removing the timing cover reveals a very Triumph-style gear train. The oil pump is recognisably Norton, however



One fine piece of cast-ironwork, and in excellent condition



This engine's seen some use, plainly. Observe the separate gaskets for each cylinder, with a cooling airway between them

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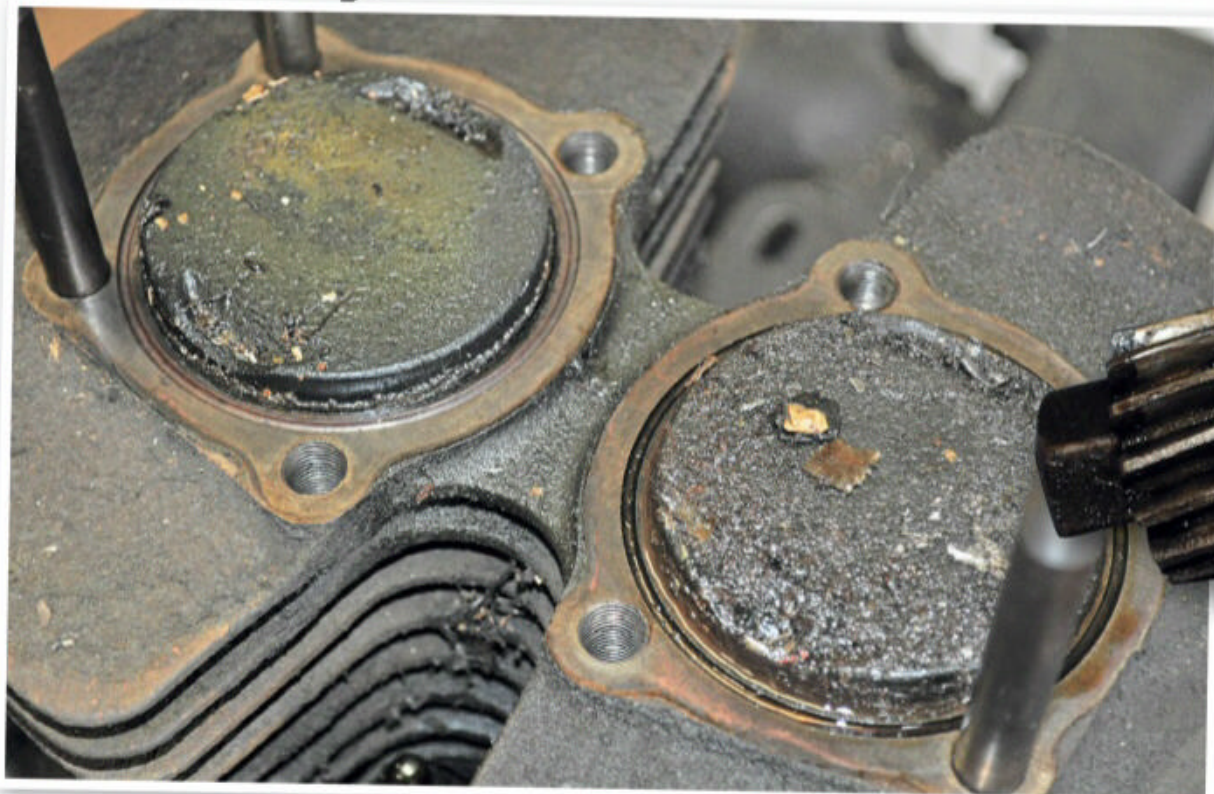
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Pistons. Only slightly grubby...

about Monty Python, it's surely well past your bedtime.

Each rocker box is made up of four separate castings and, in my opinion, would have been difficult to keep oil-tight. Perhaps this was another reason for Hopwood to frown at the design. It was surprising to find the rocker arms of this prototype engine were not machined from solid, but were very delicate steel forgings. The rocker box assemblies are bolted to the cylinder head which is, in turn, bolted to the cylinder. The latter has a conventional base flange with eight short studs and nuts holding it to the crankcase.

Between each rocker box and the cylinder base is a cylindrical tube and two steel pushrods with cup ends pressed on. Pressed into the cylinder flange, front and rear, are machined bosses for the T-shaped cam followers. All this is so much like the Triumph arrangement that it would be difficult to argue that it isn't a copy.

With oil pump and timing gears removed, the crankcase halves were now separated and the crank assembly revealed. The first question is, with one-piece rods and roller bearings, how on earth was it assembled? Each crank web, with its mainshaft and

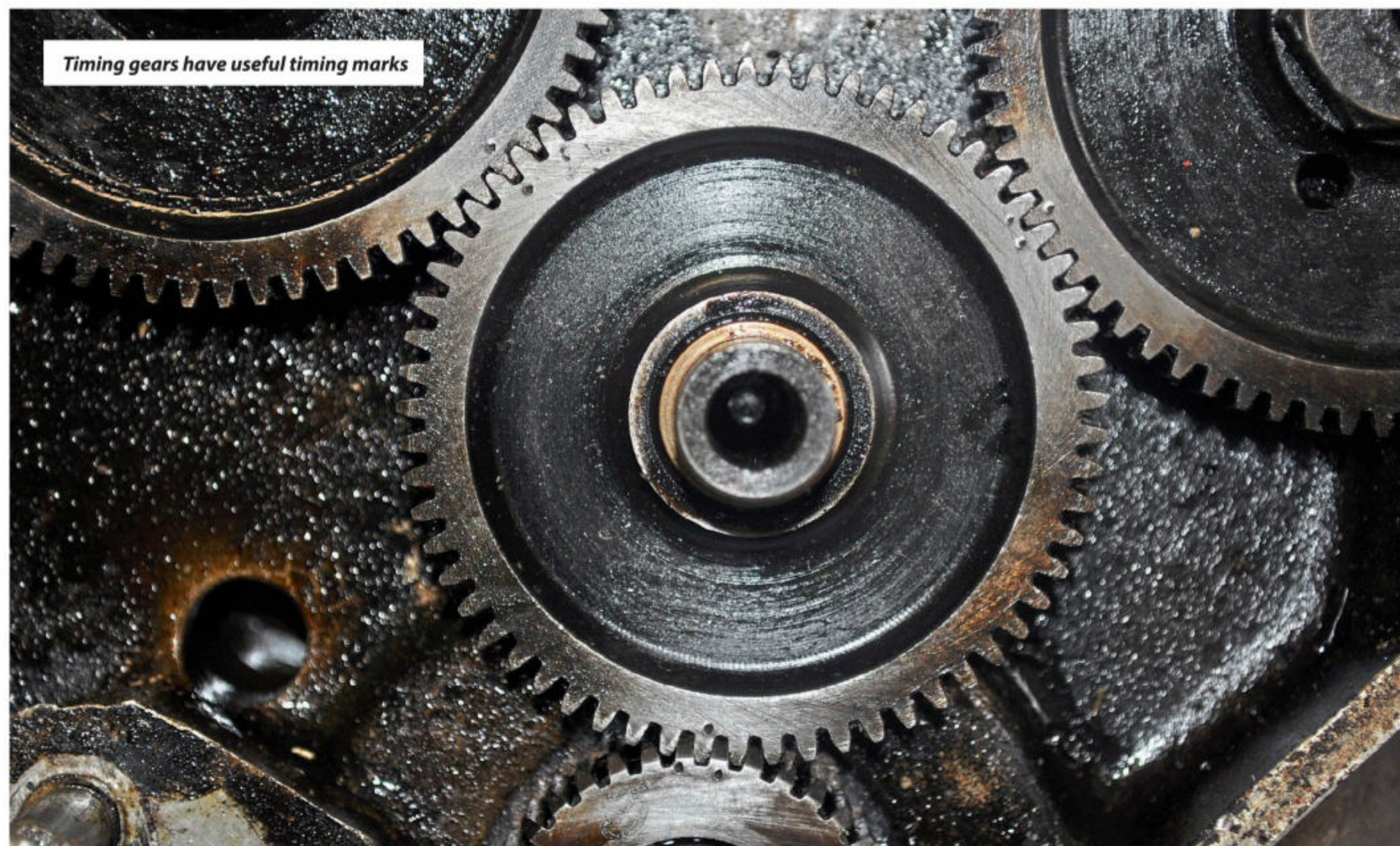


One oil pump, recognisably Norton gear-type

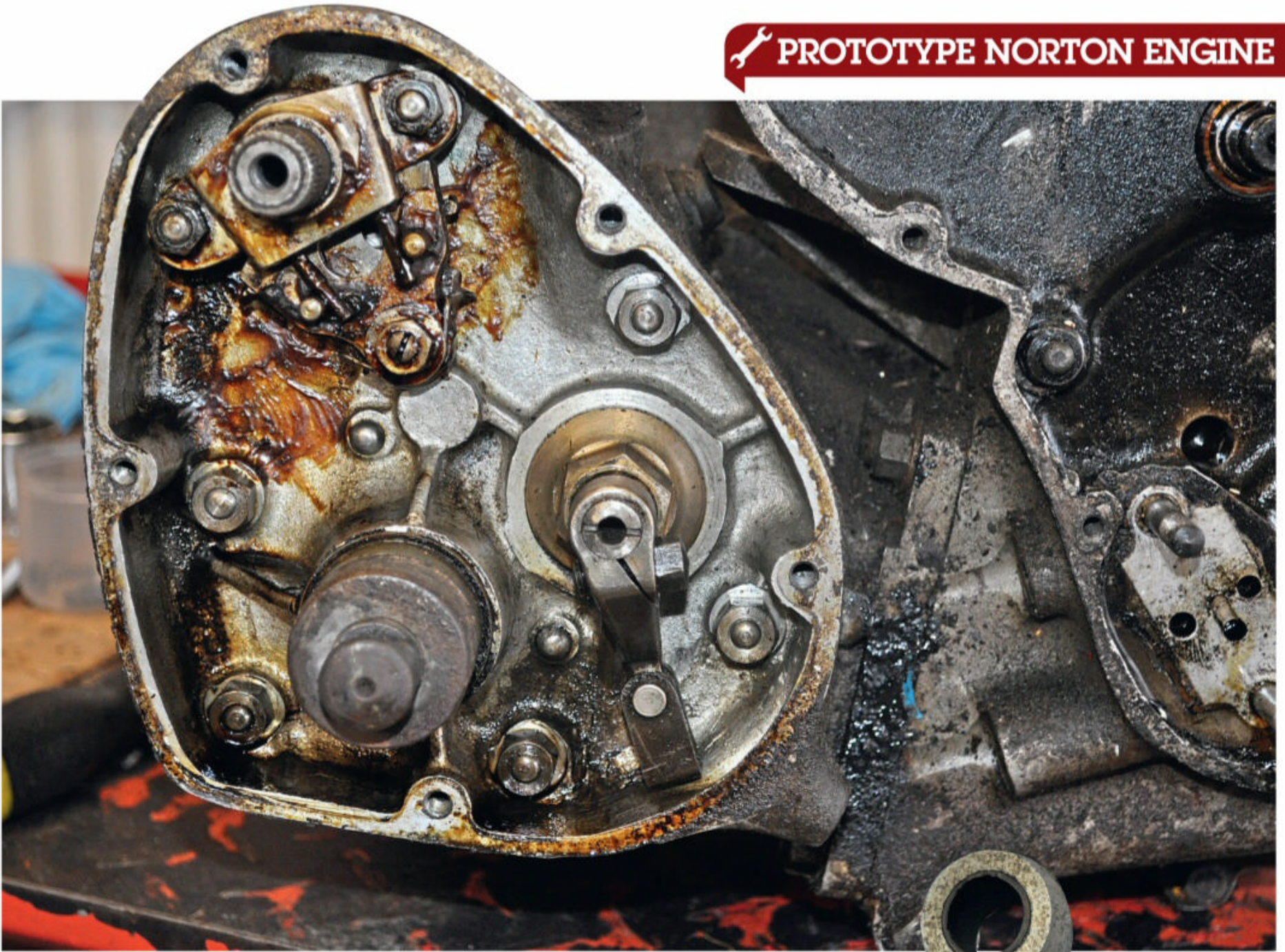
crankpin, is machined from a steel forging which appears to be pressed into the flywheel after the bearings and rod are fitted. The secret is, of course, inside the flywheel, which is made in two halves held together by five bolts. Removing the bolts separate the halves, and the inner end of each crankpin is revealed, held in place by a gorbimey big nut.

I decided not to investigate further and assumed that each crankpin has a taper where it fits into its flywheel.

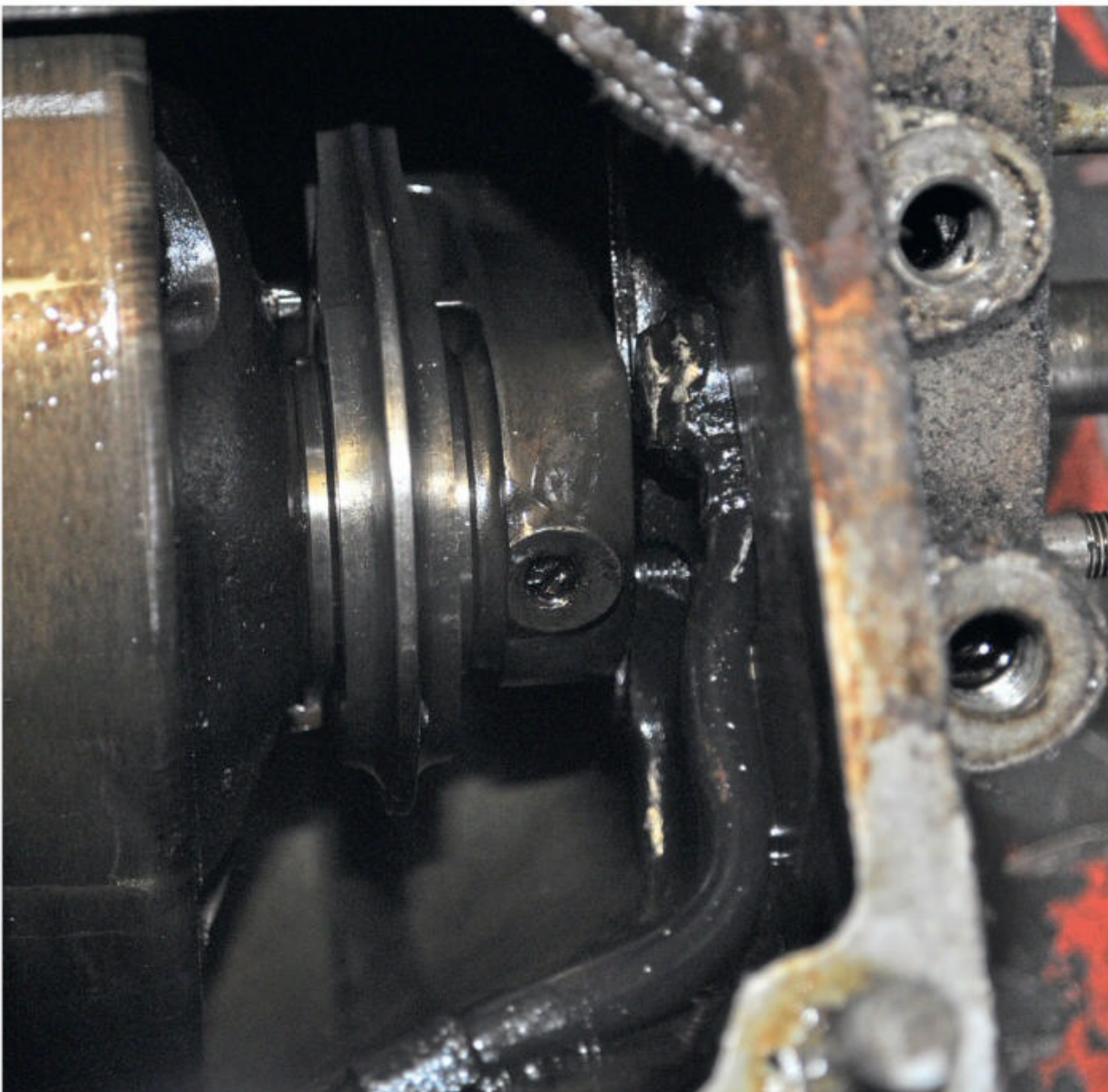
Each flywheel has six holes opposite the crankpins which were filled with lead and



Timing gears have useful timing marks



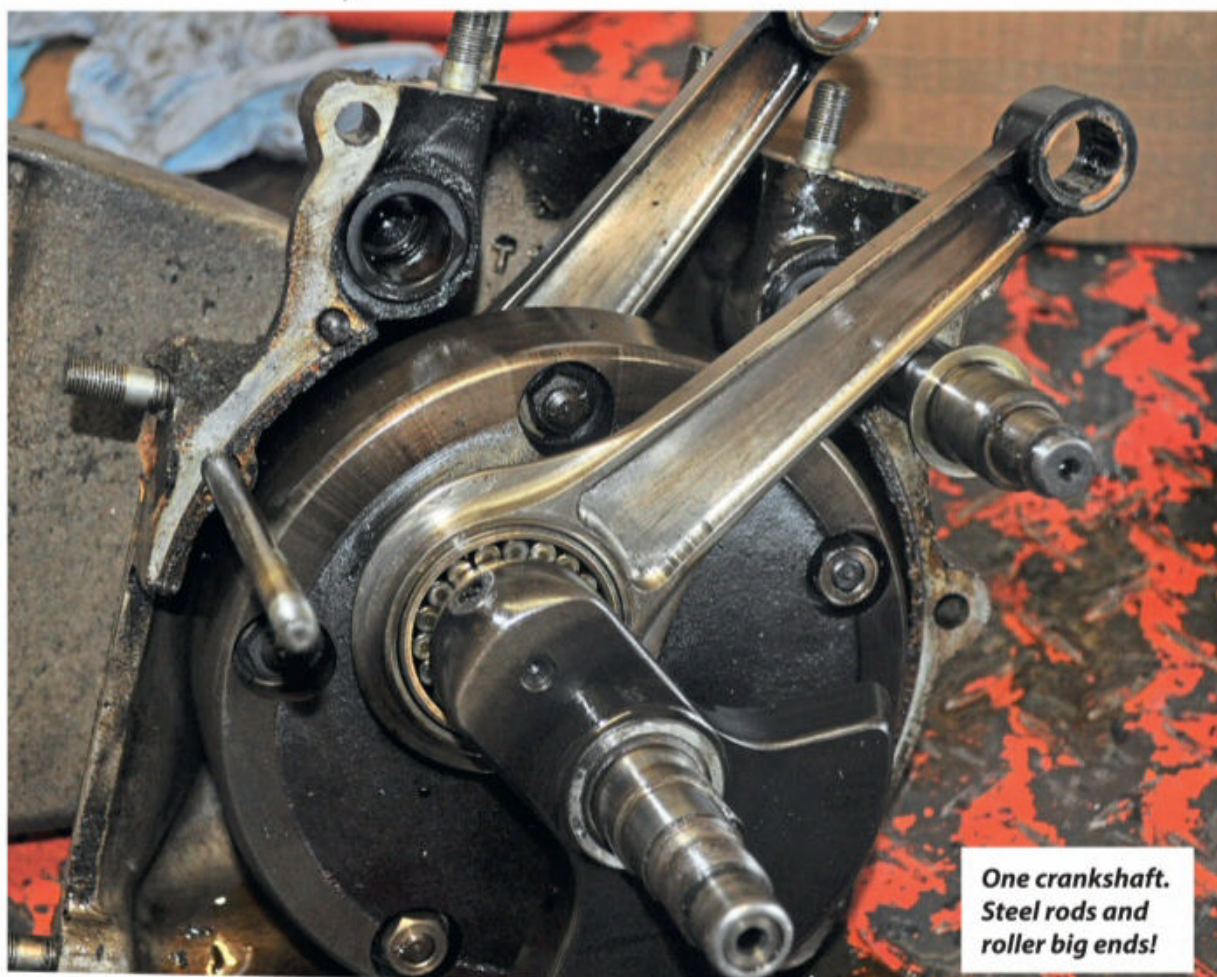
One gearbox with its outer cover removed – and in good condition. Observe where the box bolts to the crankcase



Separating the gearbox from the crankcase reveals the bottom end in all its wonder



That 'Austrian' engine also uses alloy rods (only one remains) with plain big ends

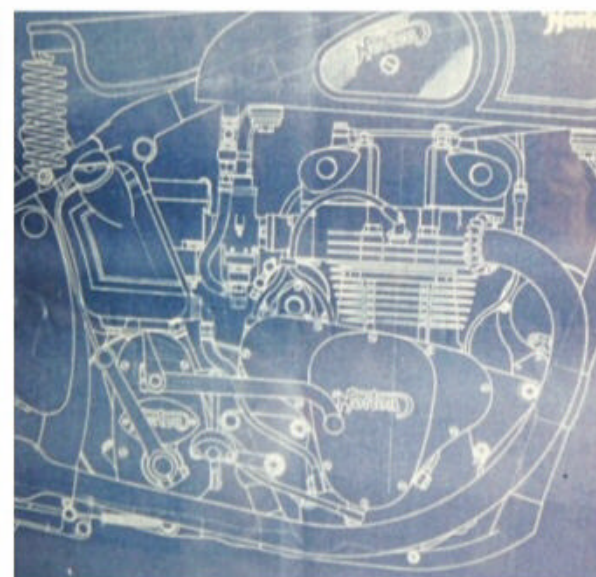
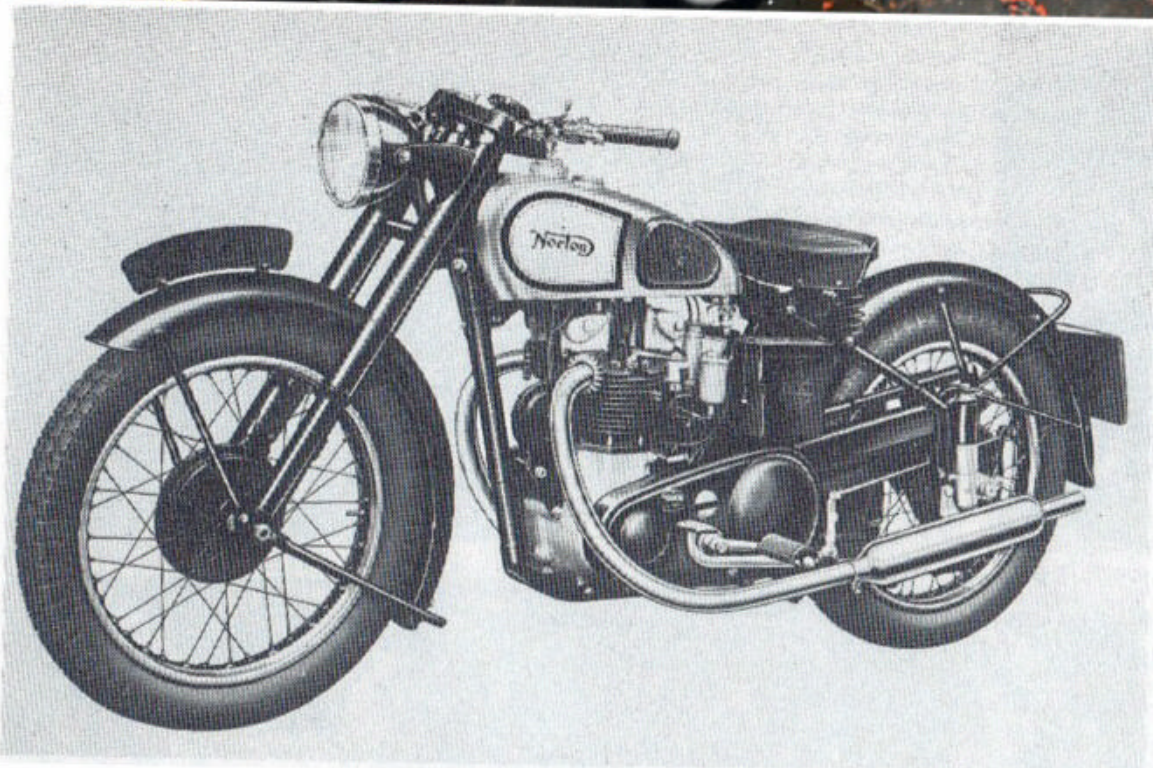


**One crankshaft.
Steel rods and
roller big ends!**

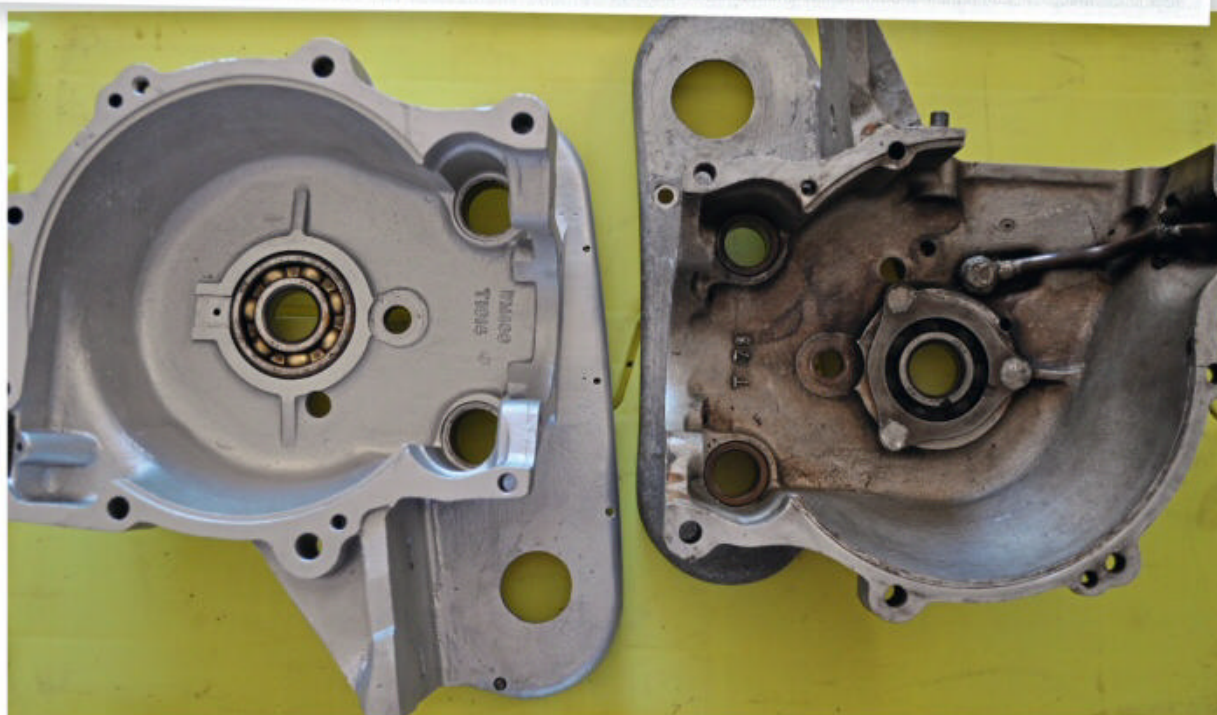
then drilled out, presumably for balancing the assembly. That suggests the balance drilling was done with a slave weight in place of the rod.

Attention now turned to the 'Austrian' crankcases which showed little signs of being used. With the one rod removed from the crank, it was seen that there was slight scoring of that pin and that the other pin was rusty. The alloy rod was itself unusual with a white-metalled steel cap and the alloy part of the rod eye running directly on the crankpin. The rod was a forging made by Oldbury, Birmingham, company Light Metal Forgings Ltd. and carrying characters 'ST 181' and '500'. Like the rocker arms, it's a proper forging, indicating that this was meant eventually to be a production engine.

The crank was made of three major items: the flywheel and two crank webs with integral mainshaft and crankpin. Unlike the previous crank, the flywheel was in one piece and a hidden ½" high tensile bolt was found inside the sludge trap. Removing this didn't



Above and Left: A part of a Norton factory blueprint and a mock-up photo show how the factory may have intended the later 'Austrian' engine to fit into the machine, complete with the standard roadster gearbox of the time. Recreating this became A Plan...



Enter the 'Austrian' engine, which is similar but rather different. Observe the two timing-side crankcase halves, the 'Austrian' on the left, with no window where the gearbox bolts to the older engine, and with different bearing arrangements

allow the assembly to come apart, nor did the blandishments of Thor #4. I assume therefore that the crankpins are each pressed or shrunk into the flywheel, the bolt is somewhat belt-and-braces, and the assembly isn't meant to come apart again.

There is a slight suggestion of a spline where each pin enters the flywheel, but I didn't investigate further. Now the measurement and inspection started, as did the challenges start to show their heads... **Rc**

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Richard assembles a functional engine, and seeks out a bicycle for it...

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Reviving Realmart's Morini

We normally suggest that an ideal first classic bike is reasonably standard and ready to ride. Fate handed Bob Pickett a non-running and much-modified track day hack, in need of some attention...

Photos by Bob Pickett, Mark Bailey

When Martin Gelder (known to many RC regulars as 'RealMart', from message boards of yore) died in 2018, I lost one of my oldest and dearest friends. He'd arranged for his bikes to go to his friends and my name was on the list. One option was his 1983 Moto Morini 3½ Sport, which I'd briefly crossed paths with before. It was the subject of our April Fool joke on the world endurance community – we were 'entering it for Le Mans 24 hours', saying that we were 'down on power but hope to make up for that with far fewer fuel stops.'

The Sport is small, praised for its great handling and has a reputation as an ideal first classic bike, being relatively simple to work on. In theory, a good starting place for me as it would be my first excursion into classic motorcycling. So this isn't going to be a typical, technical rebuild tale of a concours machine. But it might be helpful for other people who aren't mechanically adept but who like the idea of taking on a classic bike and getting their hands lightly grubby.

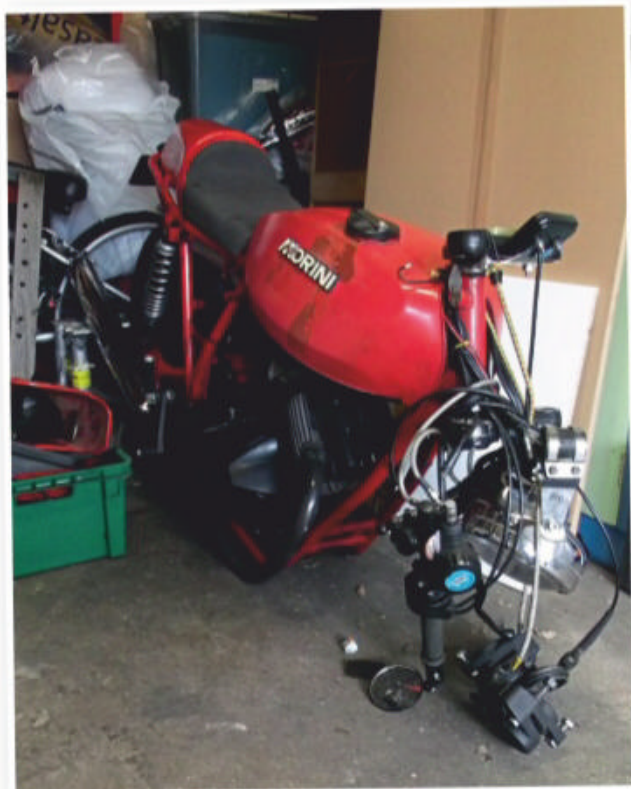
When I arrived to collect the 350, I was told that 'the Morini's forks are ready as well.' Wait, what? It transpired that Martin's ongoing quest to transform the Sport into a track bike had progressed to having cartridge emulators fitted. So bike and forks were in different parts of the country...

What condition was the rest in? It looked forlorn under a blanket minus front forks, with assorted cables, nuts, bolts dangling, front wheel alongside. It was apparent that Martin had been unwell longer than we realised; parts were not as efficiently stored





The late Marin Gelder and his Morini in 'race' configuration



The bike as found – under a blanket



Someone who knows what they are doing starts on the front

as they would normally have been and the tank needed repainting. The Morini was fitted with a miniscule solid-state battery. Amazingly, it still held charge, maybe 20 months since the Sport last moved.

From the moment it became clear the Sport was coming to me I knew I wanted to 'unconvert' it, refitting the original saddle, mirrors, indicators and mudguard. I considered removing the rearsets and putting back the original pegs, but everything I read suggested this made the riding position cramped, so they could stay. I had two spinal discs fused 20-odd years ago so I wanted to make it more upright to ease the pressure. I decided to convert the Sport into a Strada – quite a popular modification, I understand. This would mean sourcing and fitting a new top yoke. I'm not experienced with spanners so wasn't keen on adding much work.

Fellow Sport owner Drew suggested fitting a set of swan necks from Barleycorn Engineering; they would fit the existing forks and yoke, plus while providing flatter, wider bars, they kept the essential Sport configuration, maintaining its heritage. So not so much a Strada as a Strad-ish. Barleycorn were superb; I placed an order that lunchtime and it arrived the next day.

Back with the forks, I contacted RC regular, Paul Compton with his MoriniMania hat on. The damper rods and cartridge emulators were his development set which he needed to keep. Paul rebuilt my forks in just a couple of days, sourcing parts from his stock despite the many variations having the same number.

The closure of NLM could not have come at a worse time, but Drew referred me to Mdina Italia who bought up much of NLM's stock. Once used to their website it was easy enough to order brake hose, clutch cable, and cam belt. Again, a good experience – order went in and turned up a day later. I struggled to find bolts to clamp the forks to the yokes, spacers for the front axle, and some new handlebar grips via Mdina's site, so I gave them a call. They were so helpful and added the items to my online account, so all I had to do was place the order.

With everything hopefully in place, there would be one last post-assembly task; tidying that petrol tank. Martin's favourite colour was Smoothrite Red. If it was good enough for him, it was good enough for me! A pot of it plus glass paper and everything was ready to go. The initial idea was I would wield the spanners, under Drew's watchful eye, but this plan didn't



Forks, wheel and swan neck bars loosely in place

survive engagement with the enemy. On rolling the bike from the back of the garage, it was obvious this wasn't a simple tweaking job and was perhaps a task for someone with more idea what they're doing. First, the front end needed to go back together.

Drew set about refitting the forks. The swan necks slid into place easily, but refused to tighten. Culprit, my toolbox: bought with odd tasks around the home in mind, not working on a 36 year-old motorcycle. And it showed; when the nut stuck on one, brute force sheared not only the bolt but the spanner as well!

With the front wheel back in place, controls and levers on the bars and new grips slipped on, I was able to put the original seat unit and saddle back in place. That just made it obvious what else was required, and it was a long list. The bars need tightening (Barleycorn were great, posting replacement



Let the spending commence. New parts start arriving



About to test the lights ... and to find out that the electrics are wrongly wired



The initial rebuild. The bike looks almost ready, but the truth is a long way off

nuts and bolts the next day). Throttle does not snap back. Switches on both bars not working; nuts and bolts need checking to ensure they're OK. Front mudguard bolt missing. Seat lock needs replacing (seat loosely held on with cable ties). Front tyre not inflating. Tank to be sanded down/repainted. Mirrors missing (had one bar-end item, didn't want to fit that). Seat to be reupholstered and recovered. Brake pedal rubber missing. No indicators fitted. Cambelt needs fitting. Seat lock needs replacing.

On the electrical side; the kill switch does nothing. No difference between low/high beam? Can't turn lights off from bars. LED brake light doesn't brighten when brake lever applied (worked with rear brake). Ignition:

first position gives clocks but no lights; second gives no clock, lights on. Why?

I got a message from another of Martin's friends who'd found the Sport's mirrors and rear indicators and dropped them into the post. The next priority was the front tyre to make the machine moveable. London MPR is a mobile tyre repair service which comes to your door, replaces tyres and reassembles everything. Friendly, fast and efficient: £75 all in. But they weren't happy about the state of the brake caliper bolts. Mdina's parts catalogue didn't list the individual nuts and bolts. I found a schematic online which showed the caliper as a single unit, nuts, bolts and all.

In any project you hit that make or break moment. In this case, the engine. If it



Much work went into making the brakes work. Speedo cable appears a little lengthy...

Ready to try. One or two components do appear to be new





Rearset rests and a folding kickstart, takes care to operate painlessly



Morini's 3 1/2 engine has a great reputation for many good features



doesn't run, potentially it is a bottomless money pit. Now I could roll the bike onto the drive, time to put some petrol in and see what happens. Open the twin chokes, third kick and... VROOM! Huge, earth-juddering walls of sound filled the air before settling to a deep rumble when I flicked off the chokes.

So the engine worked but the electrics were a concern. This bike had been turned into a track tool. Was the odd wiring because it wasn't intended to be used on the roads?

Enter John, who has raced and spannered Formula 2 sidecars, and was going to take me through getting my hands dirty now that the Stradish was essentially in one piece. Armed with new tools supplied by John, I was able to adjust and tighten the swans, swap out the clutch cable... then swap back as the new one seemed slightly too short. Fitting the mirrors, the left went in fine, but the right? The thread in the master cylinder was knackered.

I was also fine rerouting the brake cables. While doing this, John spotted and confirmed that one of the pinch bolts wasn't tightening.



Digital stuff thrusts the electrics into a modern age. Maybe



Hagon shocks suspend the rear end, and are impressively stiff in operation

Age had taken a heavy toll on a number of the bolts. John also stripped the throttle assembly. All looked OK, so he removed the cable, lubricated it and put it back, and it now snapped back perfectly. Catching on the casing perhaps?

I replaced the race seat. It looked better. Likewise, the small race rear mudguard looked way better, so I binned the original road one. I'd been sent the original rear indicators. One look confirmed that new ones were the way to go! Having now decided this bike wasn't trying to be anything like original, LED indicators would be the way forward. Oxford make them for £29.99 a pair.

Just one big problem remained: the electrics. Clearly the wiring wasn't right and just how un-right became evident when I removed the seat. A mess of wires with a number of seemingly redundant connectors was strewn beneath. It was time to find a professional. A work colleague knew someone who knew someone, so it was time to speak to Dave Hopwood. Morinis aren't his usual thing but Dave has owned a 500 and a 350 Sport over the years. A manual (written in English) was sourced from the National Motorcycle Museum, and it was time for the Stradish to go to Hoppybikes.

Dave's workshop is a veritable Aladdin's cave of vintage tools and machinery, and he knows the provenance of all of them. He showed me a Norvin he was rebuilding for another client; he has his own forge, so he was smelting the aluminium himself and fashioning moulds to make casings and other



This may not be stylish and it may not be comfortable, but it is certainly red



Tarozzi levers increase the performance notably, we're advised

parts. This gave me an idea for some new forged knurled pegs. Dave could also make new caliper nuts and bolts and a new brake pivot bolt if needed.

The initial list of jobs wasn't small: rewire, strip and clean brake calipers replacing bolts (possible helicoil), replace brake pivot bolt, find a 'more elegant' way of keeping the side panels in place, forge new footpegs for brake and gear pedals. Then give the bike a once-over to see if anything else needed doing. He decided he would do the oil change, adding colloidal graphite.

Other items inevitably arose: the strange solid-state battery which came from an alarm system (enough oomph to get lights past scrutineering) needed to go. Something had been done to the frame to make it fit, so Dave had to raise the wiring tray so the correct battery would fit. Pads needed replacing, had to cut the rear caliper nipple seat so the bleed nipple fitted. Those calipers were nastier than first thought ('It wasn't nice in there,' said

Dave), so he cleaned those up and bought some shouldered bolts as they'd be kinder to the fork lugs. He forged gorgeous new knurled brake and gear pedal pegs from scratch, plus a number of other bolts as needed.

Dave was great, keeping me updated on progress as the build developed, so we were constantly on top of ordering, and I had struck up a good relationship with Andrew at Mdina. Finally Dave asked me to drop round to get it MoT'd. It passed first time and the Stradish was finally back on the road!

Its first shakedown ride was following ex-racer Dave on his light-as-air BSA B40E, on nadgery backroads that he knows like the back of his hand. Not, to be honest, the Morini's ideal hunting ground. But even in that environment, it gave me a feel for the bike. It's light and has very stiff suspension. The rebuilt front forks were modded as Martin sought to improve the handling, and the replacement Hagon rear shocks were set up for track use, both of which aid its flickability. You don't want to take it over any serious bumps or dips in the road or your spine will really know about it!

The hybrid set-up works well; I'm so glad I kept the race seat as it sits me in, rather than on, the Stradish. The wide swan necks make tipping the Morini over simplicity itself, working well with the suspension, aided by the rearset pegs.

The engine is a joy. It's responsive, has decent acceleration but does its best work around the top third of the mid-range. Maximum torque comes in at 6300rpm with top power at 8500. I immediately enjoyed dropping off the power into a corner, tipping in, then using that V-twin grunt to drive out.

The gearbox is light although it's possible ➤

to find a false neutral on the change down from third. This happened on the approach to a corner and left me running in hot, glad the brakes did their thing! To my surprise, I've adapted to right foot gear changes quickly, although on the way to the MoT I did occasionally try to change up by pressing under the brake pedal...

Talking about the brakes, they're effective. The twin 254mm front discs have good feel plus enough stopping power for the Morini, the rear supports the front well, though I need to get used to left foot braking.

The foam saddle was comfortable although I wish it was slightly narrower. After a 25 mile ride my thighs were aching but my posterior was fine. The riding position created by the strange mix of race seat, wide bars and rearsets gives enough room to sit quite upright but lets you slip into a crouch when required. My gripe on the comfort stakes concerns the handlebar grips; they're thinner than I'm used to with modern bikes, so my hands ache after a time. I'll get used to them.

The OE mirrors are spectacularly ugly but very effective. Sat on those wide swans, I've got a perfect view over both shoulders. The digital instruments are a puzzle. I think

it's over-reading the revs, I'm not sure how to reset the clock and I need to check the various modes to see what they do, but the speedo is glance-friendly.

The sidestand is a PITA to use, tucked away under the peg, but the centrestand is a doddle. The footpegs retract easily – you couldn't kick it over otherwise – but I'm getting the hang of flicking them down with my toes on the move. The petrol tank still needs repainting and the frame and fork legs would benefit from at least a touch up. It generally starts first or second kick, so the key thing is getting miles under our collective belts and getting used to one another.

So what did I learn with my first classic bike encounter? Do your homework. Find a bike that suits your needs and skill level. Know someone who knows what they're doing. If you don't, join the owners' club, they will be a vital source of advice and

only too glad to help. Get decent tools! Poor quality tools make life so much harder. Get an idea of what you want to do, but be prepared to let those plans change. Don't expect help from your local modern bike dealer; classics are a specialist subject. Patience is the most vital weapon in your armoury. You're playing the long game here, keep your eye on the prize.

This wasn't a typical rebuild so money wasn't an issue, but it proved what Fred Haefele said in *Rebuilding The Indian* about the 5/10 law. If you buy a basketcase for \$5000 you will end up putting another \$10,000 into it. Without itemising, I reckon I've spent close to £2000 on a bike worth maybe £2500. Would Martin approve of what I've done? He was a great believer in bikes being ridden, so yes, I think the Morini would meet with his favour. **Rc**



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Ollie's ODDJOBs

Is this what it seems to be? Depends what it seems to be, experts advise



When is a Norton not a Norton? When it's not a Norton, is when. Ollie learns too much about Honda engines...

Photos by Ollie Hulme

Strolling around the car park at Eli's Rose and Crown on a summer Wednesday evening is always an entertaining and edifying experience. You get all sorts down there. A diesel-powered Suzuki GSX250, for instance. A chopped Z1300 with a VW Beetle engine, a flat-tracked Panther and a Laverda Jota lowrider are regular visitors. As a result of all this infinite variety, a bike must be quite something to make you do a double-take.

One Wednesday, while munching on a

cheese and onion roll and supping on a Reel Ale shandy, I glanced at a rather nice-looking Manx Norton which hove into view. Except... Hang on a minute. Are we sure that's a Manx Norton? I know what it says on the tank, but there's something not quite right...

Craig's 'Manx' has a Honda engine in it. Quite a few people have shoe-horned Honda four-cylinder engines into Norton frames, but it never really works as Japanese four engines don't really suit featherbed frames. The gaps

left around the engine are too big, for a start, the engines are too wide and the angles are all wrong. But at first glance this engine, from a Honda FT500, seemed to fit perfectly. But why did those shocks slope like that? And isn't that frame loop a bit, well, *short* for a wideline featherbed?

It had indeed been shortened, by 170mm, or about six and a half inches in real money. Norton fans can be reassured that Craig didn't do it. The frame, from a Dominator, was sliced in half, bits of frame tube cut out



The slightly stumpy frame, as found

and slugs brazed in. This happened at some point between 1959 when it left the factory and 2015 when Craig saw it on eBay. Why was it done? It's a mystery. The seller couldn't provide this information. The frame had apparently never been registered, but Andover Norton's records show it was listed as a 'special specification' item. Rumour has it that it was an experimental frame for a unit engine, possibly an early version of the Norton Electra, perhaps it was done later for use as a motocrosser or a pre-65 trail bike.

Or not. Could be anything.

Extra fillets were welded into the frame and to strengthen the headstock. The swinging arm, which looks curiously modern, is a specially made item and is 170mm longer than stock, which apparently means that the steering geometry is the same as that of the original Dominator. Is this true, or even possible? Not being an engineer, I have no idea.

Craig had long ago accepted that his desire to own a Manx Norton was unlikely to ever be realised. He thought about building a Norton with a Japanese single-cylinder engine in it, but when he'd first tried to get the Honda FT500 engine into a proper featherbed from an ES2, it looked wrong. With the shortened frame the engine fitted neatly. 'I fiddled with it until it



Fooled we are not. That is not a Manx Norton engine. Maybe a Dominator, however



Creative exhausts are often a feature of a clever special

dropped in,' he said.

The FT500 is a curious beast. I had one for a few years and while it went well enough, it was from the decade that taste forgot, when the big H had lost their mojo a little. To create a modern, big single road bike, which the pundits said riders were crying out for, Honda had robbed the engine from

their XL/XR500 trail bikes.

These were kickstart only, although fitted with



The engine fits like a... well... a thing that just about fits

an automatic decompressor. To turn it into a road bike, Honda decided to fit it with an electric start and foolishly decided to delete the kickstart.

The electric start was an awful design, with a bunch of transfer gears, a Bendix drive and lots of tiny springs and so forth, all which spent their time eagerly waiting for their turn to go wrong, while the FT required a hefty, fully-charged battery to get it going. I borrowed the battery from my XS650 twin for mine, and even then the FT was a reluctant starter.

To combat these starting issues, Craig removed the electric start, got the kickstart mechanism from an XL500 and managed to fit it without splitting the crankcase, which I'd been assured was impossible. The original FT500 engine cases were swapped for those from a XL500 and the kickstart shaft was fitted. By taking off the oil pressure switch pick-up, and by a bit of dextrous work with a pair of bent circlip pliers, he managed to get it all in place. Craig said he was working on the principle that if important things fell into the gearbox innards during this mechanical keyhole surgery, he'd have to take it apart, but if he hadn't tried, he'd have had to take it apart anyway.

He fitted the rocker cover from a Honda ➤



Replica Smiths clocks look handsome, but that's not a satnav, it's a fuse box



The Norton forks hold a Norton hub, but we're unsure what the brake plate is



Bendy brake rod ABS controls the Honda rear stopper, which also boasts a handsome torque arm

CB250RS with the decompressor using a manual lever on the bars. A rare oversize piston was slapped in. FT500 owners the world over struggle to hunt these down. Indeed, it is such a rare item that this is one reason why I don't have an FT500 anymore.

The front end is a complete Norton Roadholder set-up from something Norton-ish, and the yokes, wheel and brake are also all Norton-ish. It's got a standard FT500 carb, which is a huge thing that looks as if it's off a Toyota HiAce. The lack of a speedo drive on the front wheel and the use of a Honda back wheel saw him fit an electronic digital speedo using a sensor from the rear sprocket, while he built a rev counter using FT500 innards and the face and needle from a Smiths replica.

The exhaust system looks a bit like the high-level ones used on Norton racers, but this is by happy accident rather than design and was needed because the frame tubes got

in the way of the downpipes. The noise that emerges is a creamy duff-duff-duff at tickover and a vicious snarl when you give it a handful.

He left the steering damper in place because it looked right. Four tiny rust holes in the petrol tank, which resulted from the tank being left sitting on the frame rails unprotected in the shed, were sorted by Hartlepool Radiators who put a thick ethanol-proof liner in place. It's got GSX-R1100 rearsets on hand-made hangers. To create these Craig got a big bit of alloy plate and set to it with hacksaw and a file until it was the right shape, and looks purpose built.

I envy people who can do that sort of thing. If I ever try to cut a piece of metal, I have to make a bulk order of hacksaw blades, have a box of plasters and a bin handy so I can throw what I've made away afterwards. The Manx racing nose fairing has been modded to hold a flap revealing a budget

headlight. The cornering, says Craig, is 'flawless'. The FT engine revs a lot higher than an old Brit, but thanks to balance shafts it's also smoother than anything British made.

It's fair to say that the Manx Honda hasn't gone down enormously well with a lot of Norton aficionados and has resulted in many grim stares and much tutting. Attempts to get a proper registration number proved fruitless, so it's ended up on a Q plate. And if anyone has seen the frame before or knows why someone truncated a perfectly good wideline featherbed so that it ended up perfectly suited to a Honda engine, Craig would love to find out. **Rc**



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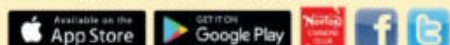


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Overwhelmed by the unfinished projects that proliferate in her garage and shed, PUB abandoned all and went to the Classic Mechanics Show instead...

Ops department: last month PUB equated one shilling and sixpence with 18p, having foolishly copied it from a bike's story board. In fact it equates to 8p (excluding half pences that no longer exist), although the error may have been in the bike's buying price – perhaps 3/6d (three shillings and sixpence which would be 18p). The glaring error stood out immediately on receiving RC, so why did it not during proof reading? Embarrassing indeed.

Since the sad demise of the Triking, room should not be at a premium in the garage as it freed up quite a bit of space. Indeed it enabled the AJS to be brought up from the shed at the bottom of the garden for easier



This restored 1961 'Three Star' Ambassador was an actual barn find. Made in Ascot, Berkshire it has a trusty 197cc Villiers engine

working. Unfortunately space has a habit of filling up. PUB had earnestly decided that the stable has to be culled – but what has happened? A couple more bikes is what has happened – they grow much better than flowers in her (neglected) garden. The PWP (pre-war project) was mentioned last month which adds one, which had previously existed only as parts on shelves or in the spare room. Then an unexpected telephone bike offer was received that needed to be grabbed whilst it was available. So something had to be squeezed back into that shed of despair!

It happened like this. After last year's Pioneer struggle the decision has been made that the single speed, clutchless, and run-and-jump veteran Triumph is beyond ageing PUB, however sweet it is to ride along the

easier bits, and something else is needed if veteran motorcycling is to continue. Actually it is a pity that the Pioneer regulations were not out, because they have changed the route and destination to remove most of the traffic lights on the latter stages of last year's route. Maybe another Triumph year could have been managed, with pushes? However, the die is cast. Readers should note the changes which take the latter part of the route down to Shoreham (as last year), but then terminates at Shoreham aerodrome instead of Brighton front ('airport' is far too new a term for pioneer types to use).

Meantime PUB had been casting around for something a little easier to borrow or buy, including a Mk1 Villiers job belonging to a friend who 'would never sell it' (Villiers two-strokes go back to 1913). However, said friend received an offer of a bike they coveted in turn, which required money, space, and permission from their partner on the 'one in, one out' principle. Hence he made the exploratory telephone call to PUB. The tentative offer might not have survived extended price negotiation and test rides, so was snapped up quickly, sight unseen, before the vendor could change his mind.

This may not be quite as foolish as it sounds, because PUB had seen a roadtest of the actual bike, and it is very like the Sun-Villiers that cyclemotorists Alan and Robert Hummerstone have ridden in many a Pioneer Run (Robert's bike had even participated in the first Pioneer Run – but not ridden by Robert of course). So she hopes it will be easy enough to ride, whilst



The 'as found' condition of the barn find Ambassador included a frame sawn in half – legend says by a father determined to stop his son riding it

remaining suitably primitive (ie. it still has no kickstart or clutch, but it is low and does have 2-speeds for hill-climbing). Potentially there is also a neutral, as there must be between gears – just think of the mayhem inside if two gears could select simultaneously – but mostly in period, a gear option was not always provided.

So there are now too many jobs to do and the PWP has probably come to a halt for some time. One of those shed bikes needed some minor fettling. The Big-Port's Pilgrim pump still needs sorting out, and now the new veteran will need checking over and adjusting to taste (plus learning to ride it). Then there is the problem of what to do with the old veteran Triumph – make some more efforts to make it manageable (there is that unsatisfactory 'Mabon' clutch shoved to the back of a dark cupboard), or sell it with or without that expensive clutch – but PUB is too honest to mislead a buyer into imagining it 'just needs fitting'. Or even despatch it all to the shed of despair (maybe not because that's now full up).

Decisions, decisions, but the decision reached was to go to a show instead and forget about the problems. The show in question was the approaching Classic Mechanics at Stafford, where PUB hoped

to see Pete's Bikes for Pilgrim pump advice/parts, but somehow missed his stall.

The weather at Stafford was not exactly warm, but it was dry, so a look outside was in order first. The Race Paddock offered some nice eye candy (a Guzzi 500, Manx Norton, Ducati 750SS, Seeley G50, etc.). A trim Tricati represented an ideal of decades ago when stuffing a Triumph twin into a light Ducati or Royal Enfield 250cc frame ('Trifield') was in vogue. BSA/Triumph triples were also prominent, and the Suzuki marquee containing exotic Japanese machinery corrected the focus somewhat to the 70s and Japanese era. Then a walk around the outside jumble left PUB a bit short of inspiration until a host of tasty tiddlers was spotted near the front entrance – Motobi, Malanca, Testi, Tecnomoto 50s that were the dream of learner riders when they were restricted to mopeds. Comparison with a co-located Sun 98 and Guzzi Zigolo (98 or 110cc – was not marked) provided a visual indication of the law of

unintended consequences – 50cc performance suddenly outpacing the earlier machines of twice the size. Somewhat more of an oddity, and belying its maker's sporty image, was the odd Ducati Mini 50, looking like a pizza delivery machine?

Inside the halls the machinery was mostly shinier, and not for sale. The Best British award went to a gleaming Velocette Thruxton, and it came as no surprise to find the Best Vintage Japanese rosette (ie. pre-67) on Heidi Cockerton's 1966 150cc Suzuki S32 USA model. An unusual exhibit was the Neander, made by Ernst Neumann-Neander of Koeln, and later Neander Motorfahrzeug GmbH of Duerren-Roelsdorf from 1923 to 1931. The frames were very unconventional, using a mixture of Duralumin and pressed steel sections, fitted with a variety of proprietary engines (including JAP and Villiers from

Right: Motobis were a spin-off from Benelli (when the brothers fell out somewhat) made independently from 1953 to 1962. They were then reabsorbed into the Pesaro parent, but the Motobi name continued until 1977. This 'sixteener special' is their 48cc Sport



Ducatis are renowned for being sporty bikes, even their earlier days when of small capacity. This does not fit that description and was surely intended for mundane delivery work





An older lightweight from Sun, the pioneer make from Birmingham. Originally a cycle maker, they then provided fittings to the motorcycle trade before offering their own machines 1906-61. Post WW2 they predominantly made Villiers engine two-strokes, of which this 98cc 1F engine 2-speeder would have been the smallest

England), this particular one being a Küchen.

Another interesting exhibit was the 1961 197cc Villiers engine Three Star Ambassador (look at the tinware embellishment), which must have been one of the last bikes to leave Kaye Don's Ascot, Berkshire, factory before the name and production moved to DMW in Dudley, Worcestershire. Given the excellent restoration of this relatively rare machine, it was interesting to read on the accompanying literature that it had been acquired with the frame sawn in two, reputedly by a father to



Ducati singles were not overweight even in their 250cc (or less) guise, but with a Triumph twin engine installed the resulting 'Tricati' was a once popular hot little number

stop his son riding it! The indoor autojumble threw up a real oddity in the form of a 900 bhp, 19,000 rpm V10 F1 Red Bull Cosworth engine (labelled at £1710).

In the side hall Bonhams had gone further than before with external screens showing the auction action to those without catalogues (the ticket to entry). This proved to be a very popular attraction, with a real crowd gathered around to watch the bidding and prices.

Highest prices included the inevitable Brough Superior, this one a modest 1927 680 ohv JAP that nevertheless cost £92,000. Closely following was the very collectible 1940 Indian 1265cc Four (model 440) that cost its new owner £72,450. Oddly enough, another Küchen engine Neander K500 SS was in the sale, which revealed its market value as £34,500.

Left: Testi were made in Bologna from 1951 to 1983. This 1979 50cc Minarelli engine model is typical of the sports mopeds which arose as soon as regulations restricted learners to 50cc mopeds – and why wouldn't a youngster want one?



A tasty race paddock line-up, consisting of Seeley-G50, Ducati 750SS, and Manx Norton flanked at either end by Moto-Guzzi

Estimating prices for the catalogues is a tough job, as revealed by the 1907 Norton V-twin (engine by Peugeot Frères, as was Rem Fowler's twin-cylinder TT winning model), for which the guide was £18-24,000. The sale price, however, went all the way to £43,700. That does not necessarily indicate a policy to estimate low, for someone got a 1963 Honda CR93 125cc racing motorcycle estimated at £26-32,000 for a lowly £21,440 – surprisingly because reserves (when present) are usually not far below bottom estimate. The preceding 50cc CR110 (also estimated £26-32,000) however, did not sell. For a very rare 1956 Honda MF350 Dream (with very Germanic influence) they hedged their

bets widely with a £20-40,000 estimate (it sold for £23,000). The estimators did a bit better with the rare Harley-Davidson 584cc model WF Sport Twin, estimated at £15-20,000. Unusually this model features a fore-and-aft horizontally opposed twin engine, like a Douglas, and it sold for £24,150. At the other end of the scale, two desirable Pioneer veterans sold for under £10,000 each, and a Banbury eligible 1929 Coventry Eagle 250cc 4-stroke for just £2,875. The £2990 that someone paid for a 1957 Matchless 350cc G3LS compares quite favourably with small ad prices.

Back with exotic bikes and prices, and for those who would like a record-breaking bike of their own, the Eric Patterson 1000cc 'Viscount' (NorVin) originally built by Peter Darvill in 1960, and credited with 131.68mph at Bonneville (which apparently still stands as a record) sold for £63,250. There was also his 1957 1150cc Norton-JAP, credited with 121.79mph in the 1350cc 'modified vintage' class at Bonneville, which went for a 'mere' £41,400.

Not all of the sale took place on Sunday, so PUB had to look up Saturday's prices on the internet, as she wanted to see how the once famous 'Peril' Speed Equip had fared. The famous sprinter Bill Bragg started this with his pointy faired Triumph 'Yellow Peril' (using a cut down Mustang drop tank) which eventually achieved 13.39s for the quarter mile. 'Scarlet Peril', with rear suspension, was a disappointment so he then built the supercharged 'Blue Peril' which got down the quarter mile in 11.19 seconds. The 2019 cost of this historic Peril Speed Equip was £20,700. In the automobilia section ('bits and bats'), also on Saturday, a Binks 'mousetrap' carburettor reached an astounding £3562 just on its own – phew.

PUB cannot help mentioning a couple of



A display of gleaming show bikes, with the Velocette Thruxton proudly displaying its Best British rosette

Brockhouse Corgis: a 98cc described as a project but looking together and complete for £612, and a better MkII for £1092. Why mention them? Well, because of what a classic name does to prices. At an earlier Barber Museum auction in the USA there was a 1954 Indian Papoose for sale, and it fetched \$4140 (£3196). The Indian Papoose is a Corgi, badged for the USA as an Indian (because by then Brockhouse were owners of the Indian Sales Corporation).

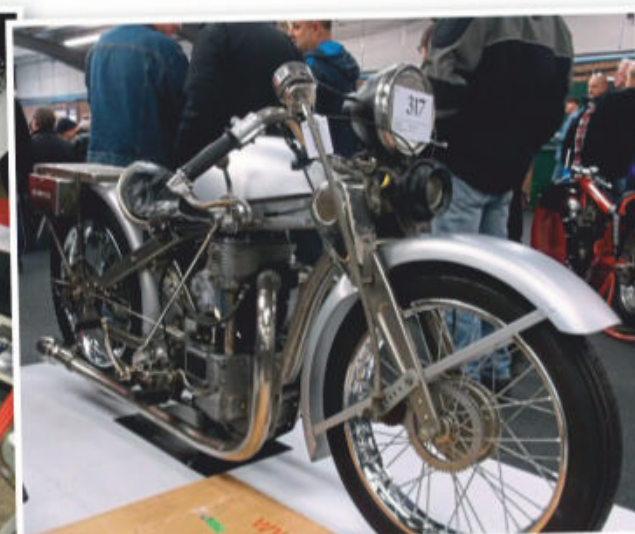
That sale also illustrated that 'buyer beware' applies, especially to expensive items. A so-called DBD34 Gold Star sold for \$6900 (£5329), indicating that there was something wrong with that bike (overstamped engine and/or frame numbers probably), so always



Heidi Cockerton once again netted a 'best' award, this time Best Vintage Japanese (pre-1967), with this 1966 US Mk2 sports version of the S32 150cc Suzuki

note both the text and any late amendments that the auctioneers make. Such an amendment may also explain why a Ducati 750SS went unsold. A 1910 Flying Merkel 884cc V-twin did not go wanting however, and sold for the notably round number of \$100,000 (£77,241).

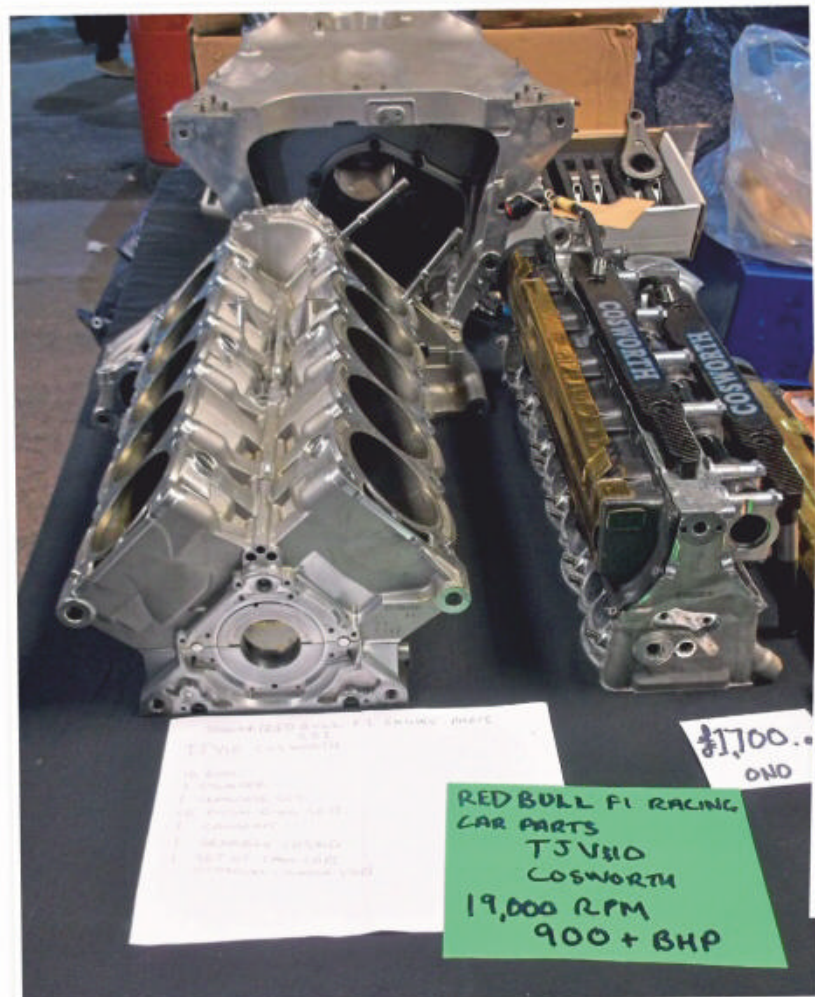
Back at home, however, those jobs had not gone away. So some priorities were written down to try and get a bit of control of things. Then some minor shed bike fettling was completed, just to get it out of the way and off the list. Another opportunity to consult Peter Rosenthal, Pilgrim pump guru, at the National Motorcycle Museum Open Day, was foiled when PUB fell ill on the day and couldn't go. However, checking his website (www.petesbikes.co.uk) reveals that he does sell parts as well as reconditioning pumps so an email has gone off – and there is no more to be done for the



Teutonic Küchen engine Neander, with its composite frame and forks made of aluminium and pressed steel sections. A Neander is a rare machine, although there was another in the Bonhams auction

AJS for now.

Then whilst contemplating veterans but awaiting an opportunity to collect the 'new' one (a mere 105 year-old), thoughts turned to the Triumph aftermarket clutch, which was dragged out and examined again. With not much to lose any longer, it was decided that it will either be made to fit the bike, or fit only for the local tip! The first problem to address was its wrong taper – whose mistake that was PUB does not know (or she might have had the maker fix it). If this couldn't be sorted then there would be no point putting any effort into the rest of it. Even B44 'Clever' Clive was unsure how to tackle re-machining the taper, because the central hollow shaft is of large diameter, much bigger than the throat of his or PUB's lathe, so only the end can be held by the chuck. That would leave an overhang of around 5 inches, nor could it be supported with a centre at the far end, because that is exactly where the taper needs re-cutting. Perhaps a 'travelling steady' ➤



Strange things turn up at autojumbles, in this case a V-10 900bhp F1 Cosworth engine, ex-Red Bull, and for only £1710



Bill Bragg's 'Peril' speed equip for sale. 'Yellow Peril' was the first, and possibly most famous, achieving 13.39 seconds for the quarter with its single Triumph engine. 'Scarlet Peril' featuring rear suspension failed to improve on 'Yellow', so a supercharged 'Blue Peril' followed which improved times down to 11.19 seconds



Jewel-like Honda 125cc CR93 and 50cc CR110 racing models were for sale, but only the larger capacity machine sold (£21,440)

might be a solution but one is not available, even if PUB knew how to use it.

Nevertheless it was necessary to try, or give up for good, so a very dodgy attempt was determined upon. Firstly, a plain shaft was turned with a taper to match that of the existing pulley, by trial and error (using engineer's blue to check). This revealed that the half angle was 6 degrees, not the 5 degrees supplied (and possibly mis-measured by PUB). It also provided a checking gauge to use when re-cutting the clutch taper itself. Unfortunately the lathe slide setting could not be left untouched for the latter operation, because the shaft taper is smaller away from the chuck, but the internal one larger. So the slide had to be reset (from 6 degrees to -6

degrees effectively).

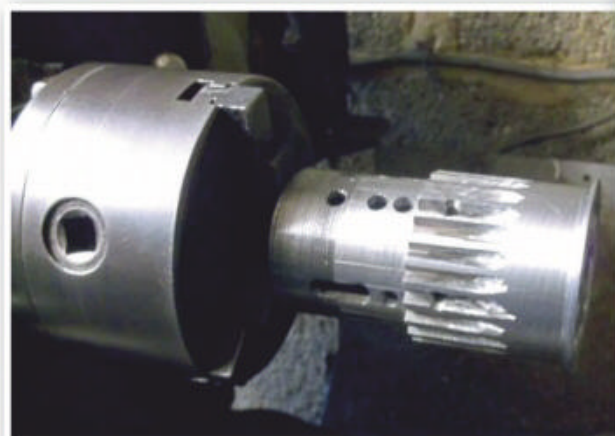
With the graduations only being one degree, and not easy to read, this opened up the possibility of not achieving sufficient accuracy. Indeed that proved to be the case, but some more trial and error, using the gauge, enabled the remaining small adjustment to be made. It did however require very slow, careful work, with the lightest of cuts. For one reason, every cut opens up the taper, permitting the centre to go onto its engine shaft further. As there should be little clearance there anyway, it may foul the crankcase, and have to be shortened to restore clearance. Metal for such shortening was in

seriously short supply!

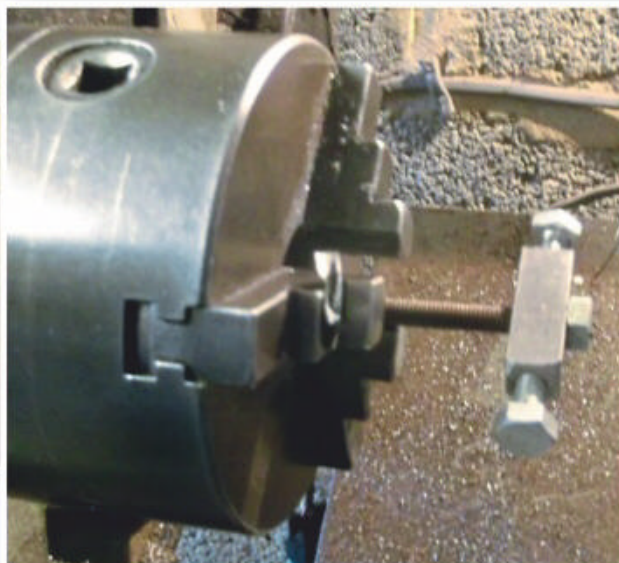
A second, but more important, reason was that anything more than the lightest cut would rip the whole thing out of the chuck. In fact no attempt was even made with it held only by the chuck jaws, which would have been disastrous. Instead cross holes were drilled in the hollow shaft (actually one of them was there already), and a crossbar made up to be retained in the middle with 1/4" screws. The crossbar was itself drilled through to accept a drawbolt of threaded rod passed all the way down the lathe spindle and out of the back, where PUB's lathe has its change gears. A big washer and nut then allowed significant tension to be applied to retain the workpiece. A lot of fiddling with shims had to be done to get the workpiece running exactly true (checked with a clock gauge) with the drawbolt fully tightened up. It still seemed very dodgy, and not how proper machinists/engineers would tackle the job (they may even be horrified) but in practice it did work (very slow speeds being used in the hope of hitting the stop button should things start to go awry).

Later the same technique was used again for other operations. The photo actually shows the workpiece after some other machining had shortened its overhang, and lightened it, because the original photo was too blurred for use. Having successfully achieved that – or hopefully so, for the final proof will only come when fitted to a bike – then it seemed worthwhile to continue and attack all of the other oversize/overweight bits.

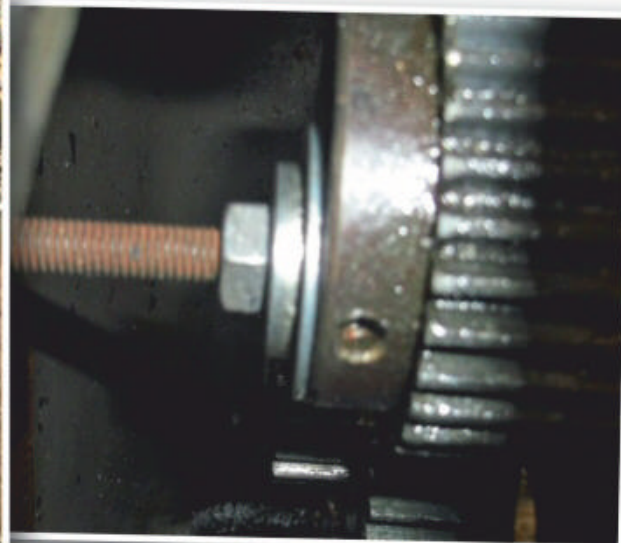
But more of that another time, possibly... **Rc**



A large diameter item (like the Triumph/Mabon clutch centre) will not go down the chuck (let alone the spindle) of an enthusiast's small lathe. So it overhangs and needs additional support – usually provided by a centre in the tailstock, but unfortunately that is exactly where the machining was required



The solution adopted to holding the centre more firmly was to use a drawbolt. The crosspiece seen here was bolted into the workpiece, and the threaded rod run the whole length of the lathe spindle



At the far end of the lathe spindle the drawbolt was tensioned with a nut and washer. Even with this precaution only the lightest of cuts, at very slow speed, was risked

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TALES FROM

THE SHIELD

On the road again, and legal too! Frank's been braving the climate ... just a little

STATE OF DELAWARE DIVISION OF MOTOR VEHICLES P.O. BOX 686 DOVER, DELAWARE 19903		DELAWARE DEALER'S REASSIGNMENT	INVENTORY CONTROL NO. 239294
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DESCRIPTION OF VEHICLE (Shaded Copying Documents not Acceptable See Note)		VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION NO.	
1977 BSA MC A65 Green	A65T GED9784	726738 MI	
DELAWARE DEALER REASSIGNMENT 1			
The vehicle described above was sold for \$			
Total price of \$	Year Make Title Tag No. State		
1 year license (if any) \$			
Net cost \$			
Document fee \$			
The undersigned dealer hereby assigns, sells, assigns or transfers to			
FULL NAME OF PURCHASER Craig Holder		NAME OF LICENSEE	
DATE OF BIRTH		DATE OF LICENSE	
STREET ADDRESS OF PURCHASER 8309 Blackburn Street		STREET ADDRESS OF LICENSEE	
CITY OR TOWN STATE ZIP		CITY OR TOWN STATE ZIP	
Saint Claire Shores MI 48080			
ODOMETER DISCLOSURE STATEMENT			
Federal and State law require that you state the mileage in connection with transfer of ownership. Failure to complete odometer statement or providing a false statement may result in fines and/or imprisonment.			
I certify to the best of my knowledge that the ODOMETER READING is the ACTUAL MILEAGE of the vehicle unless one of the following is checked:			
☐ ODOMETER READING - AS IS (NO TESTS)		☒ The mileage stated is in excess of odometer mechanical limits. (Exceeds 99,999)	
☐ N/A		☒ The odometer reading is not the actual mileage - WARNING: ODOMETER DISCREPANCY	
I WE CERTIFY, UNDER PENALTY OF PERJURY, THAT THE STATEMENTS MADE HEREIN ARE TRUE AND CORRECT TO THE BEST OF MY/OUR KNOWLEDGE, INFORMATION AND BELIEF.			
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PRINTED NAME OF PURCHASER/AGENT		SIGNATURE OF PURCHASER/AGENT	
		DATE OF SALE 02.03.10	

Registration for use on UK roads is simple enough provided you have the correct documents and fill in the form correctly. You'll need the US title...



I was getting bored with walking round and around the BSA – the formerly project BSA. It looks very nice, and it's very interesting to look at, but... OK, it's time to learn how to start it. My first attempt had been notably inefficient, with serial kicks producing nothing nothing nothing, followed by a sudden and

unexpected roar and a lot of spitting back and reluctance to rev.

A motorcycle, be it ever so handsome, is nothing if I can't start it. Was this BSA secretly a Velocette in disguise? I rarely have any problems at all kickstarting BSA twins, and never the soft old sofa single-carb models, so I was plainly doing something wrong. The

answer is clear: email Richard the rebuilder and ask him if there was A Procedure?

It's not easy to express mystification via email, but he did very well. And his instruction was clear: full choke, tickle only enough to ensure that the float bowl is full – none of this enthusiastic planet-destroying flooding nonsense – then kick. I tried this.

HM Revenue & Customs

NCH Car Team
HM Revenue & Customs
National Clearance Hub
Rail Quays, 3 Stanley Street
SALFORD
M60 9LA

Phone 03000 579069
email ecom.nchteam@hmrc.gov.uk
Fax 03000 588473

AEM Classic Motorcycles
Milford House
Bridgetown Hill
Totnes
Devon
TQ9 5BN

Date: 09-02-2017
Our ref: 290-021495C 18-01-2017
NOVA ref: NOVA 17P809287

Re: Import Vehicle Post Clearance Checks satisfied

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your vehicle import notification which has been received by our office.

VIN: A65T GE09784

HMRC have reviewed your vehicle import notification and are satisfied that the VAT and duty has been correctly accounted for.

Based on the information you have provided to HMRC, an application can now be made to register and license the vehicle with Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). Please note that certain vehicle information will be shared with DVLA for registration and licensing purposes.

Yours Sincerely

Name: Mrs. L. Garside
NCH Car Team

Director: Lin Homer NOVA Letter

One NOVA doc, which confirms that UK taxes have been paid

It worked. The engine fired up second go and revved away merrily. I wound back the choke. The engine stumbled towards the land of the stall. I closed the choke again. The engine picked up. What's with this mysterious choke performance? My bikes almost never demand choke, just a serious flooding and careful catching on the throttle, followed by a few moments of nursing until the engine settles down to a dependable burble. I mailed Richard again and enquired about the choke phenomenon.

'The carb's set up properly,' came his brief reply. I was of course suitably chastened. So: full choke it is. Starting becomes steadily

MOT test certificate

① Vehicle identification number
A65TGE09784

② Registration number ③ Country of registration
Non EU

Make and model
BSA A65

④ Vehicle category ⑤ Mileage
2,269 miles

Pass

⑥ Date of the test ⑦ Expiry date
17.09.2019 16.09.2020

To preserve the anniversary of the expiry date, the earliest you can present your vehicle for test is 17.08.2020.

⑧ Location of the test
UNIT 8C, KINGSHILL INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, BUDE, EX23 8QN

⑨ Testing organisation and inspector name
**V104872 ACE MOTORCYCLES
A. Webster**

MOT test number
4365 4579 8375

Check that this document is genuine by visiting www.gov.uk/check-mot-history

If any of the details are not correct, please contact DVSA by email at enquiries@dvsa.gov.uk or by telephone on 0300 1239000.

Receive a free annual MOT reminder by subscribing at www.gov.uk/mot-reminder or by telephone on 0300 1239000.

Page 1 of 1
VTC20/2.0

Issuer signature

One current MoT, tested using the frame number

reliable. More reliable. The Beezer and I could make jointly harmonious broom-broom noises in The Shed. The sun shone. It was fairly frustrating. I rode the bike out onto the drive, made broom-broom noises then rode it back. This is of course a most marvellous way to pass the time, but it wasn't going to get us – Beezer and me – onto the road. It needed to be road legal for that.

Can Ace Mosickles do an MoT on the frame number alone? Of course they can. Can they collect the thing as it's unregistered, uninsured and not even faintly legal? Of course they can. They do. Couple of hours later there is this enormous roaring sound

BSA OWNERS' CLUB
Dating Certificate

PO Box 111
Moreton
Wirral
CH28 9DA

19 August 2019

Dear Mr Westwood

Frame Number :- A65T.GE.09784
Engine Number :- A65T.GE.09784

From the photographs I can confirm that a machine with this frame number was manufactured and despatched as a 650cc BSA A65 Thunderbolt to the BSA Incorporated, Baltimore, Maryland, USA.

It is still fitted with its original motor.

The information given in this certificate is taken from frame book 285 page 38 of the former BSA Motor Cycles Ltd., Armoury Road, Birmingham 11. Dates quoted therefore can be taken as the date of manufacture.

Yours Faithfully


Steve Foden
BSA OWNERS' CLUB
Librarian

Certificate Reference:-
3320westwood.docx



One dating certificate, mysteriously without a date

outside. I panic, fearing alien invasion, like you do, and rush slowly to investigate. It's Ace Austen. He's sitting on the Beezer, grinning wildly. The Beezer's really bellowing. If it had a tachometer, which happily it does not, I would have been terrified by the needle's position. 'Revs really high!' Austen yelled over the wall of sound. I flicked the throttle cable adjuster, where the outer cable ferrule had stuck outside the throat of the adjuster, and the tickover dropped back to sane levels.

He'd ridden it back. His pal appeared in a car to take him away, possibly to a padded cell somewhere. 'What's it like? Why did you ride it?' I ➤

The Beezer as it arrived back from the USA after what appears to have been a short time actually on the road. As is evident, the process of breaking it for spares was well advanced



RealClassic

*Moment of triumph! The
BSA is road legal, hurrah*





The Plan did not include stripping and repainting the frame, as you might be able to see. Time for that Smoothrite encounter at some point. Side panels were intended for a very late Bonneville, which uses the same frame, more or less



Stainless steel heat shield was fashioned from a Norton rotary exhaust shield, and there appears to be a sufficient air gap to prevent the side panels melting. So far



It is impossible to have too much oil filtration. This external device is called a Hide-de-hi, remarkably, is well made and uses a T160 element

was wracked by curiosity.

'Great. No van. Cheers!' And he left.

It is more than two decades since I last registered a bike for use on the UK's crowded roads, and I'd read so much about the horrors of the current process that I was seriously considering doing an illegal thing just to avoid it. However, you can't believe all the horror stories you read online, so I set to. Registration requires several things. Make a list – not my list here, because you might be reading this in 2050 and things may be different. The last time I registered an imported BSA, many moons ago, it was really easy. I took a stack of docs to the LVLO – Local Vehicle Licencing Office – and gave them some money. They gave me a number and a hand-written tax disc. This has changed. Somewhat. The time before that I'd found a Matchless badged as a Norton which had returned from Stateside exile with no docs at all. So I went to the LVLO explained that I'd found it in a barn (which was carefully not untrue) and had an MoT and insurance... and they gave me a number. Just like that. Times have changed, as I said.

If the bike's repatriated, then you'll need a piece of paper called a NOVA document, which confirms that UK taxes have been paid when the bike came back to the UK. You'll also need the US title document. Both these bits of paper show the frame number – the VIN in modern parlance – and you must be able to show that the bike you're registering also has those numbers – easily done with photos. And then you'll need a dating letter from a DVLA-approved source confirming that the bike is indeed what it claims to be and when it was manufactured. In this case the BSAOC were happy to oblige. It's worth joining a club for this service, unless you already know all about both bike and process, in which case you'll usually

pay a little more than a member for the same service. I was puzzled that the dating letter – provided very promptly indeed by the BSAOC's dating officer – didn't actually include the machine's date of build, so I scanned a page from a handy reference tome to accompany it. That worked, plainly.

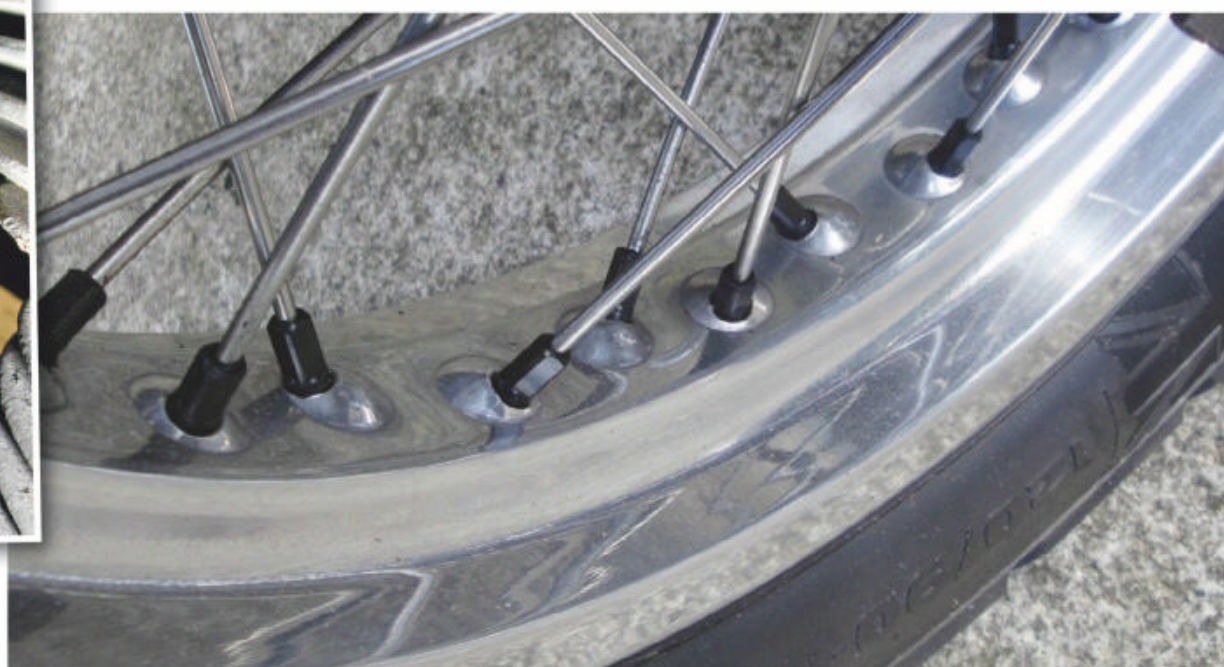
And you'll need an MoT. To actually ride the bike to your MoT station it needs to be insured, which is why I had asked the Ace guys to come take it away. And a receipt to show that you do actually own the bike. And lots of pics showing the bike as it is and the engine and frame numbers.

All of this brings you to the final hurdle: the cheque to the DVLA. Oh, also the covering letter explaining that you want the bike to carry an age-related number. Because they look nicer, but actually do not add 30mph to the top speed. I was surprised by that. Oh... also the DVLA form, which appears to be designed to cover all vehicular eventualities, including HGV, PSV and points in between. Cross nothing out, just fill in the applicable bits. And then... And then... And then...

You post it all off to that alleged outpost of the outer darkness, the DVLA. The process should take around four weeks, they suggest. Everyone to whom you mention this instantly convulses with dark laughter. You soon learn to say nothing, just tap a foot gently and maybe whistle, tonelessly.

Meanwhile, being of a certain bent, I did of course have a contingency plan. It's so illegal that I cannot reveal the hideous machinations, but it might involve another bike in The Shed which might be of a similar age and in possession of a current V5. And an unboltable number plate. Four weeks, they'd said. Ha!

Meanwhile, I could practice starting the A65T. I repeated this simple process with such dedication and enthusiasm that I ended up hurting my right foot so badly that I could only hop about the house for ➤



Tiny details. Observe the black spoke nipples tensioning the stainless spokes

a week or so. This is divine punishment for even entertaining the theoretical possibility of doing bad and illegal things. Think of the children, I sighed to myself; the shame!

Slightly less than four weeks later a thin brown envelope descended to the doormat. Of course I ignored it. Plainly a reminder to tax one of the old clunkers. Huh. I wanted to ride my BSA. The Better Third opened the envelope. Maybe she thought there was chocolate inside? Oh look, she said; the BSA's registered. How remarkably painless. Off to Ace Mosickles for them to make up a shiny new number plate, and then, and then...

Observe that the shiny new number plate is almost central on its brackets ... but not quite. This is because I used an old number plate from a long-departed Triumph as a template. The brackets are the same. Drilled, fitted. Observed that the plate's creatively off-centre. Who should have checked the centricity of the old plate before using it as a template plate? Cannot imagine.

Part of the original Great Plan was to avoid rebuilding the entire engine if at all possible. There are several reasons for this. Poverty is one. Also profound weariness. Another is that the bike appears to be pretty low mileage and apart from the missing centrestand lug and the wholly destroyed primary drive it didn't appear to have been mangled hardly at all. I'm also of the opinion that BSA used the best parts available and had a decent QA standard – whereas a lot of modern pattern parts are of dubious provenance. So

The rider's view is a little unusual. Because the astoundingly bright Paul Goff headlamp bulb is too big to allow the idiot lights to live with it inside the shell, Richard Negus produced a neat binnacle for them. Observe the heroic front brake cable, too

I took a chance, and slightly wonderfully Richard agreed. Maybe he just wanted the thing out of his pristine workshop? Who can tell? The seriously great news here is that although it still hurts my foot to kick it over, this is because I am feeble, because the engine – probably on an original low compression of 7.5:1 – is really easy to kick over. And when it fires up it does so with no fuss, no untoward rattles, no smoke, not even a leak. It even ticks over once warm – although it takes over a mile to warm up sufficiently for the choke slide to be fully opened.

First impressions? Either the speedo under-reads remarkably or I really am getting old and feeble, because 30mph on the clock is more like 50. Which is a puzzle. The speedo is a spare left over from the endless B25SS rebuild, and so far as I can see should have the same gearing, pretty much. But who cares?

The oil light extinguishes instantly This is good news. First gear engages with a silence unfamiliar to a chap familiar with old and knackered gearboxes. Click, it goes. I ease the clutch to check, and lo ... we have engagement. And the clutch? Rebuilt from the ruins of several clutches? It works excellently. Very smooth (new plates), no slip and no grabby snatch. No more excuses.

The bike is quite tall. This is an early twin – May 1971 build date – so is one of the 'tall' oily



Tiny details too: small but bright indicator sits on its own bracket. That front brake cable gets in everywhere

frames. But it's not a problem at all, mainly because the machine is

also very slim, and considerably wieldy. Up and down shifts are perfect – the power egg genuinely does feel to be hardly worn at all. Power is easy, relaxed, smooth. This is a good, torquey twin, and I'm treating it as though it's new, so its first few miles on the UK roads – it spent its last years in Baltimore, USA – are going to be gentle. A relaxing hundred miles, then an oil change, then we'll let it stretch out a little.

In the meantime, there is good news and the inevitable not so good. The latter is the front brake. Richard described it as being entirely suited for use on wet grass. This is true. However – the slightly better news is that it is improving noticeably with use, and does now actually slow the bike down. It's not up there with a pair of twin discs, but it's never going to be. One of the several decisions was that I'd leave in the original shoes with the original linings, hoping that they'd be more effective





Above: Where the oil goes on the oily-frame twins. Neat original dipstick, too

Left: BSA's controversial conical front brake may not be the most efficient, but this one is at least well finished. The brake plate is flat black, while the hub is gunmetal grey



Masked maniac sets out for maiden flight. It's impossible to see how worried he might look

than the NOS linings which went into the B25SS of fond memory. So far? Well...

The good news is that the A65T is great to ride. The seemingly mismatched tyres work together very well indeed, and at the gentle speeds I've employed so far the entire machine handles like a good oily-frame BSA should. The forks work well, smoothly and unobtrusively, while the mysterious rear units – chosen by Richard because he felt that they looked nice and have a variable stroke, so I can raise or lower the seat height a little should the urge arise – are really comfortable. That's a surprise. Front and rear ends work together like they were intended to, which they actually were not.

But the fluke here is that the standard footrests match the non-standard trials bars perfectly. Which should not be a surprise, given that the footrests on these machines and on oily-frame Triumphs appear to have been intended to work with the higher and wider export bars and small export tank. And the seat – a chopped down stock item – is perfectly suited to the hands and feet, and indeed the controls do fall readily to hand. And feet. I was a little surprised that Richard decided to leave the original type Lucas switchgear in the big box of bits, but the modern kit he prefers is a delight. Really easy, and completely familiar to anyone used to modern machines. Which I am.

And, and... that exhaust. It sounds superb. It's no louder than it should be, although it is louder than the last A65T I rode which was fitted with the stock 'megaphone' style silencers. Does my left leg cook? No. Richard's home-made heat shield works well, and despite a lot of low speed trundling there's no sign of the plastic side panel adjacent to the pipes melting or catching fire. Yet.

As you may recall, should you be very patient and possessed of a fine memory, The Plan was to build something a little special, without losing the essential character of a great British twin. A tweaked twin. A cooking twin with street scrambler pretensions. A fake Firebird Scrambler which has no historic value but is at the same time unique. A Firebolt (handsome contraction of Firebird and Thunderbolt) if you like. No high compression, no yards of bright chrome and no chance of destroying a rare original machine by customising it. The original

plan was for the machine to be basically black: black paint, some gloss, some flat, black exhausts and everything. Somehow it became red – a surprise but increasingly easy on the eye as familiarity grows. The Plan was a good plan, all conspirators worked together to produce a rather fine machine. Roll on sunshine! Because I still find it difficult to take a freshly refinished machine out into the boggy filthy salty lanes of winter coastal Cornwall – this will pass.

Anyone got a set of folding footrests for one of these? Just a thought... **Rc**



Success! Roll on summer sun...

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